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THE ODD COUPLE

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By Mark Hosenball

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CIAL HEALTH CARE ISSUE
orm • Why "play or pay" won't work •
The new British model • The voucher option

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This is my Daddy.
our house
me
Joe across the street
My Mommy knows the words to every song she taught me how to do the hustle on the Porch.
Every night he loses his glasses and Mommy turns around and tells him that they're on his head.
zuzi
new baby

When Lisa was born
her kidneys didn't work.
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learn to care for her.

It saved $200,000
in hospital costs.

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CORRESPONDENCE

The press and Clinton

To the editors:

The Bush campaign committee need not hurry getting its negative campaign blitz on Bill Clinton going. The media are doing the job for it. First, *Time*'s cover offers: "Why Voters Don't Trust Clinton." And then, what did I pull from my mailbox? TNR's bright red and black cover, "Why Clinton Can't Win" (May 4). It is pompous and arrogant, telling readers in April how the vote will go in November. It is as though the journalists had just discovered a new, immutable law of physics and had to rush it into print so that we would *know*. Fact: "The Democrats have a loser." Say it often enough and what is the effect? I hope you journalists wake up the morning after the election with egg on your magazines because Bill Clinton has pulled off a Harry Truman.

HAPPY HICKS
Statesboro, Georgia

To the editors:

Fred Barnes begins his scrupulously researched piece ("Loser") offering up the political wisdom of one "Vin Weber, *the* Republican representative from Minnesota, [who] remembers *the exact moment* he concluded Bill Clinton will never become president" (italics added). Barnes follows up this solid chunk of evidence with far more substantial matter from "Republican strategists" who (surprisingly) concur. We next get a quip from Rich Bond, the Republican national chairman: "This guy's damaged goods." And still more solid, painstakingly researched commentary drawn from Richard Wirthlin, "a pollster who worked for President Reagan," and, further on, dazzling punditry from "Bush pollster Fred Steeper." How could this consortium of GOP eminences, pollsters, and posturers possibly produce such a consensus of anti-Clinton opinion?

H. J. SCHEIBER
Melbourne, Florida

Pierre and Floyd

To the editors:

My thanks to both the well-meaning and the condescending responders to my letter of April 6 regarding your use of the term "poujadism," lower case and without context or parenthesis, in the March 11 editorial. There were numerous letters in addition to the three printed in your May 4 issue, as well as more than fifty phone calls.

The phone calls were an especially odd lot. They came for fifteen consecutive days, usually around 6 p.m. and mostly from the East Coast. They came from people undaunted by the fact that I was a plain name in the 209 file of 555-1212. They came from people eager to scold me for shallow research, from people eager to demonstrate they knew something I didn't, from people genuinely eager to help, and from people eager to agree that the usage was inappropriately obscure. I am happy to report that the final poll (no more calls, please) places forty of the fifty-two callers into the last two categories.

Without exception, the callers were willing to chat until I ended the exchange, which was on their dime. Some of the first discussions lasted an hour. I apologize to those later callers with whom I was short. Thank you for the effort, but my knowledge of the life and times of Pierre Poujade had achieved, given the height of my brow, a threshold beyond which I did not care to go. After the first week, I would merely categorize the position and attitude of the caller, then sign off.

Two calls in particular stand out. A French lady who works at the Smithsonian and claimed to *actually know Fred Barnes* supported my position and said that she too did not understand the reference. She called her mother in France. The mother recognized the name "Poujade" but wasn't long on details. The second call was taken at midday not by me but by our tile setter, Floyd, who was installing the kitchen counter. Floyd is a preternaturally nice, meticulous man. He expected his wife to be calling, but no, it was an East Coast poujadism apologist of the second category. Floyd covered six message pad pages with perfectly spelled, detailed notes of the lecture pouring forth. I can only imagine the conversation and its instigator. Woody Allen would direct.

To the sagacious Gregory F. Robison I offer thanks for his accord on perspicuity in a journal that strives for a general readership. The concurrent reference in *The Atlantic* was well illuminated by context, unlike TNR's reference. Regarding my wife's "actual reading of *The Atlantic*," this did occur but only *after* reading TNR, which arrived about the same time. Her discovery of this other reference to "poujadism" occurred after my letter was sent. Also, the skillfully rendered tone of my letter should have indicated that I was being both facetious and hyperbolic when I wrote that my wife reads the "entire" *Atlantic*. Nobody does *that*.

Stephen Langley "would be curious to know what reference books" line my walls, and I would be eager to tell him. But first I would want to repeat my basic point: I never doubted that modest research would eventually yield an answer. Yet a visit to several standard home reference books and calls to learned friends did not. So, I judged, the writer and his editor had violated a lexical covenant. That said, let me assure Langley that Professor Thornton and I both turned first to the OED, mine published in 1981, and found no mention of "poujadism" or any derivative. I've since learned that it is in a recent supplement. A non-academic, I do not regularly buy the supplements. Unlike your editorial, Langley's citation agrees with *The Atlantic* and at least capitalizes the "P."

I do not have an in-house Encyclopedia Britannica, merely an Americana (1988). In the Americana entries, nothing separates Poughkeepsie from Poulenc. Langley may disagree, but I don't take this choice of a home encyclopedia as a sure sign that the rough beast is slouching toward Fresno. A subsequent trip to the county library revealed that there is also no entry in the Collier's Encyclopedia (1989), the World Book (1990), the American Academic Encyclopedia (1987), or the Britannica prior to the fourteenth edition. Perhaps Langley would sell me his used fifteenth edition for a few quid? I'll pay shipping. By the way, the Britannica capitalizes all forms of the p-word.

Back to my own reference room. I've got a Random House Unabridged Dictionary and Webster's Third. Nothing there. Maybe foreign, I thought, or named after a social philosopher. It smells French, so I checked my Petit Larousse (1976), which is anything but small. Nothing there. The Encyclopedia of Philosophy (1967) has "personalism" and "panpsychism," but no "poujadism." Maybe it's Oriental, I thought. That would certainly explain why none of us here in Middleborough had heard of it. But there was no index reference in Durant's *Our Oriental Heritage*. So I gave up and wrote my letter. Further research has taken the form of asking most everyone I know or meet and judge to be book-learned if they know the meaning. Not yet one in several score has known. This includes Ph.D.s in English, in Classics, and in French, as well as some people who just read a lot.

This matter is best summed up in an observation made by a caller from Wisconsin, a retired political science professor who *did* know of Poujade and his movement: "Expecting you to understand that reference would be like expecting today's French schoolchildren to understand a freestanding reference to 'perotism' in the year 2032." This assumes, of course, that Mr. Perot's polit-

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ical comet will burn as briefly as M. Poujade's and that "perotism" will ever define itself. But the point is made. And I stand by it.

KELLY LEWIS
Fresno, California

Spirit of the laws

To the editors:

Your editorial "Europa, Europa" (May 4) struggles to establish a link between the result of Britain's recent election and wider political trends in Western Europe. You assert that "the Tories won because prosperous Southeastern England refused to transfer any of its wealth to distant British regions or to a national government it did not trust," and describe this voting pattern as an example of "economic secession." Before this neat theory gains any momentum, there are a few caveats that should be entered.

The Conservative Party won by a national margin of 7.69 percent over its Labour opposition. Even if no Tory supporters at all had gone to the polls in Southeastern England, Labour would still have lost the popular vote. The British tax system is indisputably progressive, the relatively well-off paying twice the rate of income tax as those with lower incomes. Labour's advocacy of increasing the top tax by a further 19 percent (to 59 percent) went far beyond the bounds of any debate about transferring wealth from south to north. If there were any mood of "economic secession" among Britain's prosperous regions, the much-maligned community charge ("poll tax") would have flourished.

Your editorial implied a uniformity across Western European nations in positive attitudes to the future of the EC, the British excepted. But since the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, voters across Europe have recoiled against the prospect that their nation-states may soon be stripped of sovereignty. More than half of German and French voters now oppose proceeding toward European union on the terms agreed five months ago, and their doubts are replicated among sizable minorities in Italy, Spain, Eire, and Denmark. One of the principal reasons for Britain's caution is the real fear that European socialism, far from being dead, as you assume, could be codified and ossified in the form of a Europe-wide "Social Charter" enforced from Brussels.

The more likely explanation for the Conservative victory in Britain is a simpler one. Despite the economic recession, the impetus for change after twelve years of rule by the same party, and the apparent staleness of the administration, British voters just found the Conservative Party much closer to the spirit of the times.

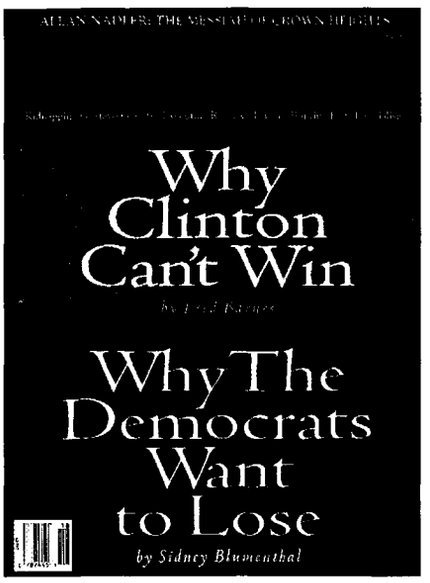
ANDREW COOPER
Evanston, Illinois

Banking on it

To the editors:

It's a free country, and Alexander Star ("Unsettled," April 20) can go on with his ventriloquist act as long as he likes; but will he please get me the hell off his goddamn lap?

When I alluded to a "distaste for pluralism" in my February 19 *New York Times* op-ed piece, I was neither defending nor dissenting from Israel's West Bank settlement policy, nor was there any hint,



overt or covert, at favoring annexation. My reference was to the Palestinian Arab formula for a wholly *judenrein* Palestinian state—as proposed, for instance, by Walid Khalidi in the Spring 1988 issue of *Foreign Affairs* (page 788), wherein Khalidi calls for all "Jewish settlements" founded after 1948 [sic!] "to be evacuated but not dismantled." In other words, deportation and confiscation; get rid of the Jews but keep the farms and cities the Jews built from scratch.

Would the Palestinians, I asked, wish to apply their own standard for minority populations to the approximately 800,000 Arab citizens of Israel? Such a principle, I argued, would be unacceptable to the Jewish state, where non-Jews of all backgrounds have equal voting rights.

The next time Star picks on someone to be his dummy, he had better learn to throw his voice with a modicum of accuracy.

CYNTHIA OZICK
New Rochelle, New York

To the editors:

Alexander Star complains about the disingenuity of the arguments made in favor of continuing Jewish settlement in the West Bank, yet he engages in a little disingenuity of his own. He ridicules William Safire for accusing the U.S. administration of trying to limit settlement "to Arabs only" by stating, "as if the Arabs didn't live there already." In the next sentence, he ridicules Cynthia Ozick for expressing similar sentiments.

The Safire quote is taken out of context. In the article Star quotes from, Safire criticizes the administration for trying to bully Israel into abandoning any claim of sovereignty over the territories. If Israel were to knuckle under, the result would be, in Safire's words, to "leave the West Bank to exclusive Arab development—and ultimately, Arab sovereignty."

Ozick and Safire are simply asking why Arabs have a superior moral or legal right to build new houses in the West Bank. Why does our administration seek to halt only Jewish development? And ultimately, why does the administration take for granted that the Arab claim to sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza is superior to Israel's claim?

These are fair questions. And they are not answered by saying, as Star does, "the Arabs were there to begin with." So were the Jews, albeit in the minority, until they were all killed or driven out, starting with the massacre of Hebron's Jews in 1929 and ending with the massacre of Jewish prisoners in Gush Etzion during Israel's war of independence in 1948. The pre-1948 Jewish population of the West Bank is seldom mentioned outside Israel. But a desire to re-establish a lost Jewish presence—and perhaps thereby to gain a measure of vengeance—strongly motivated the first post-1967 Jewish "settlers." It is not a coincidence that the rebuilt Gush Etzion and Kiriat Arba, just outside of Hebron, were the first Jewish "settlements" founded after 1967.

DAVID SHAYNE
Seattle, Washington

China closet

To the editors:

"'Nihaoma' is Cantonese for 'How are you,'" says your April 20 Bushism of the Week. No it isn't. "Ni hao ma" is Mandarin, the kind of Chinese spoken in Beijing and used by China's leaders—the standard language of the country. The expression is pronounced "Nei hou ma" in Cantonese.

GEORGE JOCHNOWITZ
Staten Island, New York

The writer is a professor of linguistics at the City University of New York, St. George campus.

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FROM WASHINGTON

Last resort

"It is the Congress that appropriates every dime," said President Bush, attacking "the spending habits of the Congress" at a Bush-Quayle fund-raiser the other day. "It is the Congress that tells the Executive how to spend every dime."

To puncture this tiresome conceit is one reason I'm for Senator Paul Simon's balanced budget constitutional amendment. Each year, it declares, "the President shall transmit to the Congress a proposed budget ... in which total outlays do not exceed total receipts." Neither Ronald Reagan nor George Bush has ever come close. In fact, the total amounts Congress has appropriated over the years aren't too different from the amounts these two presidents have requested, whatever disagreements there may have been about where the money goes (defense versus domestic, etc.). Simon's proposed amendment would call this hoary Republican bluff.

The amendment also would require Congress to enact a deficit-free budget, unless a three-fifths majority in both houses voted not to. Congress, terrified of the sour public mood, is apparently near-certain to pass some kind of balanced budget amendment next month and send it on to the states for ratification. But voting for a balanced budget amendment is not just a desperate short-term political expedient. For Democrats, it is good long-term politics as well.

The voters are hypocrites about federal spending: hating it in general, cherishing it in the particular. The deficit—a government now spending four dollars for every three dollars it brings in—is the concrete expression of this voter hypocrisy. Politicians of both parties cater to this hypocrisy. But by and large it is Republicans who since 1980 have made it the central feature of American politics and Republicans who have benefited politically from it. Republicans have gained the political advantage of being perceived as the party more opposed to government spending, without paying the political cost of opposing specific expenditures.

A balanced budget amendment, if it worked, might lead to lower spending or higher taxes or some combination. But at least it would lead to an honest debate. That would not just be hygienic. It would be helpful to the party that's been losing the dishonest debate of the past decade.

Of course mere partisan advantage is not a good enough reason to amend the Constitution (though tell that to the term limits boys). There are those who think that the goal of a balanced budget is neither necessary nor wise. And there are those who support the goal but doubt the means.

The argument against the desirability of a balanced budget has many byways, but the main point is the traditional Keynesian one that the stimulus of a deficit should be available during recessions: the proper goal is balance over the course of an economic cycle. Simon's three-fifths escape clause is intended to allow for deficits during bad times (without even requiring an offsetting surplus in good times). If exercised promiscuously, this escape clause could make the amendment worthless. But the medicine is there if needed.

What's driven some liberals to support a balanced budget amendment, however, is the realization that deficit spending has become a medicine we Americans can't be trusted with. We use it when we're sick, then when we're healthy we just increase the dosage. When, inevitably, we get sick again, even gargantuan doses don't have their usual therapeutic effect. Even to use this drug properly in the future, we first will have to clear it out of our system for a while.

The deficit also makes new forms of government activism nearly impossible. If liberal politics is to be anything more than a holding action ("reactionary liberalism," in Kevin Phillips's devastating phrase), the nation's deficit addiction must first be cured.

The Washington Post says that a balanced budget amendment would be "Trivializing the Constitution" and creating a "permanent monument to a temporary failure of political will." This is a serious objection. As a general rule the Constitution ought to dictate the procedures of democracy and the protection of individual rights, not specific policy outcomes. As Justice Holmes famously put it, "A constitution is not intended to embody a particular economic theory.... It is made for people of fundamentally differing views." Then, too, you don't want to encourage all those constitutional cowboys out there with other ideas for fiddling with the sacred text. ("We can amend that dang Constitution if we have to," said Ross Perot recently, with insufficient reverence.)

But have you read the Constitution lately? Many of its clauses address concerns that now seem trivial. See the Third Amendment, about quartering soldiers. We should only be so lucky that fiscal responsibility seems a passé issue in future years. And the balanced budget amendment, despite its name, is arguably procedural, not substantive. It doesn't mandate a balanced budget, but simply amends the legislative process to counteract the current bias against one.

Then there's the question of enforcement. The conservative enthusiasm for this amendment is ironic, since far more than the typical constitutional provision—it is an invitation to judicial [illegible]elancing of exactly the sort they claim to abhor. What happens if president and Congress don't meet the requirements? Do judges have these officials arrested? Do they institute across-the-board budget cuts of their own? Or do they duck the issue by calling it a "political question" and refusing to act?

The answer, I hope, is the last. The amendment would probably be judicially unenforceable. But that doesn't make it worthless. The Constitution depends, to some extent, on the willing suspension of disbelief. Judges have no real power to force the other branches to obey any constitutional provisions—even those mandating elections and so on. And yet the Constitution is generally obeyed.

Robert Reischauer, head of the Congressional Budget Office, calls the balanced budget amendment a "cruel hoax" on the public because—like Gramm-Rudman before it—it substitutes procedure for substance. It allows politicians to pretend they're addressing the deficit while actually putting off the painful slicing for later. (The amendment takes effect two years after ratification by the states, which also could take years.)

Reischauer is right that the amendment is a hoax on the public, which is not being told what a balanced budget would actually entail. But is it a cruel hoax? It would be if the three-fifths escape clause became a routine exercise. But if the amendment actually produced genuine fiscal discipline, even four or five years down the road, it would be a kind hoax, not a cruel one—sort of like enticing a beloved relative into a drug treatment program.

It is cowardly, to be sure, for tod[illegible]'s politicians to support a balanced budg[illegible] amendment instead of actually taking action toward a balanced budget. But that cowardice will catch up with them one way or another. They'll either have to face the music in four or five years or retire in order to avoid it. In fact, the balanced budget amendment could make that other constitutional cure-all—term limits—superfluous.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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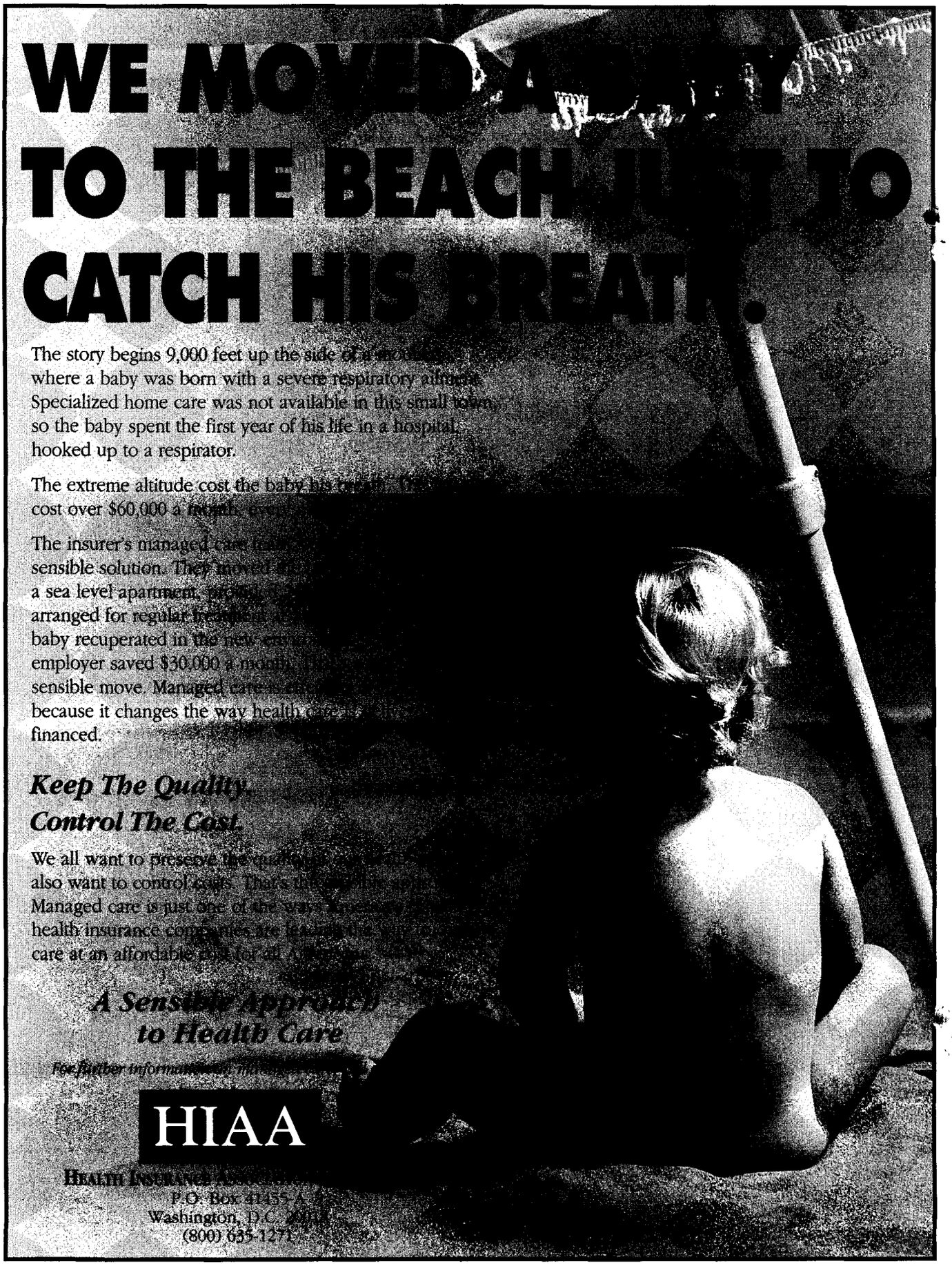
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TO THE BEACH JUST TO
CATCH HIS BREATH.
The story begins 9,000 feet up the side of a mountain
where a baby was born with a severe respiratory ailment.
Specialized home care was not available in this small town,
so the baby spent the first year of his life in a hospital,
hooked up to a respirator.
The extreme altitude cost the baby his health. The
cost over $60,000 a month, every
The insurer's managed care
sensible solution. They moved
a sea level apartment,
arranged for regular
baby recuperated in the new
employer saved $30,000 a month
sensible move. Managed care is
because it changes the way health
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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JUNE 1, 1992

THE CURE

America does not have a health care crisis. An estimated 36 million Americans lack health insurance, but not all of these people are poor (more than a fifth have family incomes at least three times the poverty level), and most of them do get treatment, though often haphazardly and inefficiently. In 1986 the uninsured contacted the doctor two-thirds as often as the insured and spent three-fourths as many days in the hospital. That's not good, but it's also not a crisis. And most Americans get first-rate care, albeit expensively. What we really have is not so much a crisis as a health care inconvenience: we spend more money than we want to, and it buys us less security than we feel we need.

In dealing with a market as huge, complex, and diverse as health care, a very real worry is that a wave of well-intentioned reforms might make things worse rather than better—might even create a real crisis. If we're not careful, ten years from now we may be wishing we had left well enough alone. So, in repairing the current system's shortcomings, it's urgent that we pitch to government's known strengths, avoid making irreversible mistakes, and not try to solve all our problems at once.

There are two main problems with the existing health care system. First, many people lack insurance. Moreover, most people with insurance get it from their employers as a fringe benefit, which means that people who lose their jobs—or who develop a chronic illness and need to switch jobs—can be in real trouble. Any solution must extend health insurance coverage to fill in these sometimes hazardous gaps. Second, costs are rising exponentially, squeezing out other kinds of spending in government and corporate budgets. In 1970 we spent a bit over 7 percent of national output on health; this year, about 14 percent. On almost every estimate, it's going to get much worse. The real challenge of health care reform is to extend access and contain price—which almost everyone agrees we need to do—while also taking into account a third consideration against which our current system stands up fairly well: patient choice.

None of the current round of proposals from the White House and Capitol Hill strikes a satisfactory balance between these goals. The leading Democratic plan fails on grounds of cost control, and the Bush proposal misses the mark on access as well. But the options for rational reform are still many and varied. Using the present system as a foundation, Susan Dentzer argues in this issue (see "Work-Care," page 18) for extending access by requiring employer-based coverage, while fiddling with tax incentives to make businesses smarter buyers of health care. Such reform would lead to more HMOs, which do a good job of limiting cost while maintaining a minimal—and certainly not optional—level of choice.

Another, more drastic, alternative that would extend access, contain cost, and maintain choice is a voucher system. One approach would be to abolish the employer tax credit for health insurance and replace it with more generous individual vouchers that could be used to purchase health care along Heritage Foundation lines. The idea is that a market-based voucher approach would force people to shop for health care and insurance as they do for cars. Then they'd be forced to make tradeoffs and seek lower-cost providers, pressing prices down. The problem here is that in health care the consumer is a uniquely weak shopper—often sick and far less informed than the health care provider. And the Canadian experience of relatively modest health inflation (as opposed to the American one of explosive growth in costs) shows that only a single, central shopper—the government—has enough clout to hold prices down.

It's for these reasons that we favor a hybrid approach, along the lines that Ezekiel J. Emanuel proposes in this issue (see "The Prescription," page 21). It's a mix of public provision and private choice. As Emanuel argues, a more comprehensive system built around the model of community health plans—and the elimination of private insurance—may be the best way to bring market forces to bear, combining vouchers, group buying power, and a measure of devolved democratic decision-making. Like the plan proposed by Senator Bob Kerrey, the Emanuel version depends on a central board to set the national level of health care spending and determine the value of vouchers. This is to circumvent the political pressures that push government spending ever upward within any kind of national system—as they do in the case of Medicare and Medicaid. Some independent and genuinely powerful body is vital if the health care inflation we already experience isn't going to get worse under a national system. If such a body is not included in the new deal, the cure could be even worse than the disease. •

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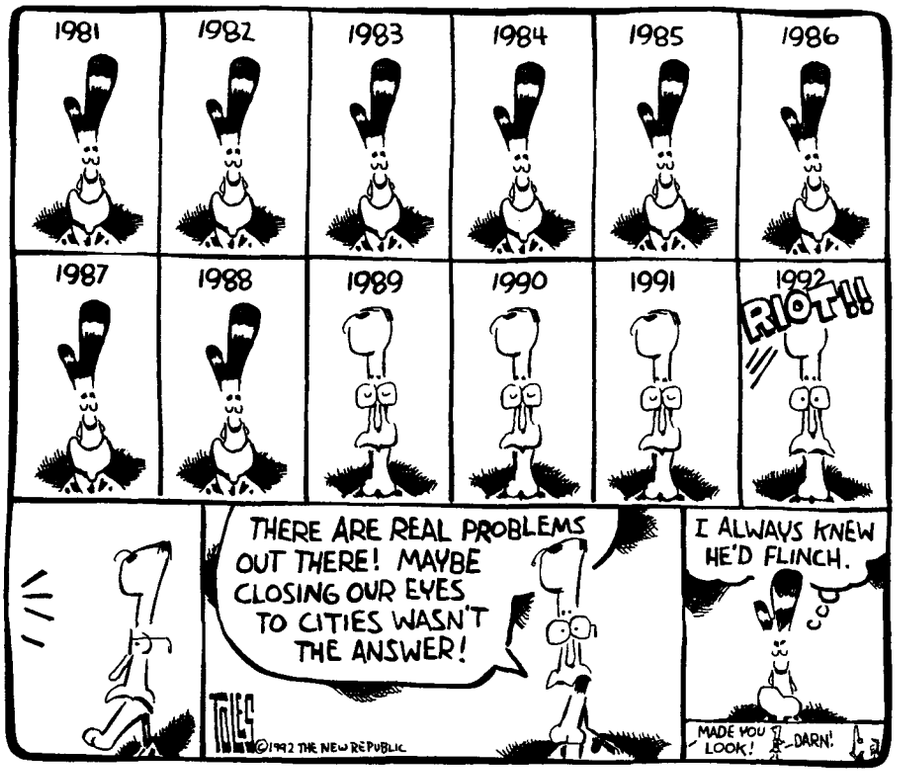
NOTEBOOK

BUSHISMS OF THE WEEK: "Having said all that, I—and let me tell you something. And you know it better than I. There is no way really, I guess, that the president can come here in an every-four-years situation and not have it be accused by some of being political. I don't want it to be political. I want to get by this. And we've got plenty of time later on in the year for the politics. I want to hear from you—just all the bark off—as to what you think we can do." —May 7, to community leaders in South-Central Los Angeles

"It was here in the ugliest moments of the r i o t i n g — t h e brother's keeper aspect." —same day, on people who helped others during the violence



BLAME IT ON RIO: So Bush is going to Rio after all. What a surprise. The only question all along was how he would get himself to the world's biggest photo-op while doing himself the least political injury. His solution: a "compromise" global warming treaty riddled with what French drafter Jean Ripert elegantly called "constructive ambiguities." Bush's pitch to the environmentalists for the new treaty is that it sets goals for limiting greenhouse gases; his pitch to the conservatives is that the goals can be shirked, because there are no actual deadlines involved. The question is: If Bush really believes that global warming is an entirely hypothetical threat to the environment, what is he doing pledging the United States to limit our greenhouse gas output at all? If, on the other hand, he believes global warming represents a real environmental danger, why is he reserving the right for the world's richest nation, responsible for 20 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions, to pollute the global environment?

PERFORMER AND PARTISAN: A forthcoming book by *Harper's* publisher John R. MacArthur reprints another revealing memo Bill Moyers penned for president Lyndon Johnson (see "The Power of Myth," TNR, August 19 & 26, 1991). Mike Wallace divulged the memo at a recent Overseas Press Club dinner: it noted that Moyers was working "on steps we can take to improve coverage of the Vietnam War.... We will never eliminate altogether the irresponsible and prejudiced coverage of men like Peter Arnett and Morris [sic] Safer, men who are not Americans and do not have the basic American interest at heart. But we will try to tighten things up." When confronted with the memo's contents, Moyers offered his usual defense: "I'm sure I said a lot of things thirty years ago that I regret. I came to journalism from politics as Mike [Wallace] came from show business, and journalism hopefully has made both of us less silly, if not wiser, than when he was a performer and I was a partisan."

SLEAZEBALL WATCH: Haiti's provisional government didn't hesitate to make hay out of the attempted assassination on May 3 of Senator Raoul Rémy, who was elected on the ticket of deposed President Aristide but has since thrown his support to the junta. "ARISTIDE SUPPORTERS ATTEMPT TO ASSASSINATE SENATOR RAOUL RÉMY," announced a press release issued by the Haitian junta's Washington flacks, Craig Shirley & Associates. It would be interesting to find out how much Haitian taxpayers are paying for this propaganda on behalf of their unelected military regime, but we couldn't, because Shirley & Associates apparently hasn't gotten around to complying with the federal law that requires it to register with the Justice Department as a foreign agent.

BOOK NEWS: Congratulations to Ann Hulbert on the publication of her biography *The Interior Castle: The Art and Life of Jean Stafford* (Knopf). And in the realm of lighter fare, congratulations to the rest of us on the publication of *Bushisms: President George Herbert Walker Bush In His* Own *Words* (Workman). The book is a compilation of the president's greatest verbal goofs and stream-of-consciousness monologues, many of which first appeared in these pages as Bushisms of the Week. •

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WHITE HOUSE WATCH

UNKEMPT

By Fred Barnes

President Bush was blithely unaware, but the low point of his post-riot activity was May 6 and 7, the first two days of his tour of Los Angeles. The White House staff had trouble adjusting to Bush's forced immersion in domestic policy and to Housing Secretary Jack Kemp's high-profile role as presidential adviser on urban affairs. Roger Porter, the domestic policy adviser, groused about having to sit next to Kemp on the plane to L.A. and listen to him hold forth. As Bush inspected a burned-out shopping center, aides fumed about Kemp's penchant for getting in the TV shot with the president. An aide was dispatched to instruct Kemp to butt out. Back in Washington, another aide complained that Kemp is ineffective in lobbying Congress, that his conservative anti-poverty program probably won't pass, and that even if it does, it won't work.

The high point was May 8. That's when Bush made one of the most crucial decisions of his presidency—politically crucial, at any rate. He declared he'd push aggressively for an emergency program to help poor people and cities. And he was explicit about whose ideas he was embracing: "Look," the president told aides privately, "Jack Kemp is saying the right things. He understands what we need to be doing." Almost instantly the Kemp-bashing stopped. When Bush announced on May 12 his six emergency "initiatives for strengthening urban areas," three (enterprise zones, welfare reform, tenant ownership of public housing) were straight from Kemp's playbook.

Kemp is a political lifeline for Bush. The strongest rap against Bush is he's not connected to the lives of average Americans and doesn't lead on issues affecting them. That criticism was repeated mercilessly in focus groups of Bush voters conducted by the president's campaign pollsters. The voters were especially chosen because their attachment to Bush in 1988 was weak. This year, the pollsters found, their attachment is nonexistent.

Then came the L.A. riot and Bush's sudden infatuation with Kemp. The riot presented Bush with a rare opportunity in which doing the right thing is likely to help politically as well. All he needed was a program, and Kemp had one. Some senior officials at the White House and the reelection campaign thought Bush should treat the urban issue gingerly. Since it's not traditional Republican turf, Bush should tread lightly, offering disaster relief, then changing the subject. Kemp urged the opposite, a full-blown effort to enact a program. Why did Bush side with him? One reason was that Bush was emotionally affected by what he saw in L.A. Twice he seemed on the verge of tears. The other reason was that he spotted the chance to show sustained leadership on a domestic issue: "People expect a president to do something, to show leadership," says a Kemp ally at the White House. "To have a major perceived failure here, it could send him into Carterland."

Bush could hardly have been oblivious to Kemp's appeal. He had shied away from putting Kemp in charge of the advance party that went to L.A. two days before his own trip. To avoid choosing among Cabinet secretaries, Bush picked Deputy Education Secretary David Kearns. Once in L.A., though, Kemp was swarmed by reporters as he traveled in Bush's company. When Kemp and other administration officials entered a holding room where a half-dozen L.A. area mayors waited, the mayors rushed to Kemp. "Every mayor we talked to thinks of Kemp as a hero," says a member of the Kearns advance team. "They don't care about Louis Sullivan." When L.A. Mayor Tom Bradley met with Bush, one of the first things he said was, "I'm a big believer in enterprise zones," Kemp's pet proposal.

Kemp played his new influence to the hilt. "I've really been a hair shirt to these people," he said, referring to White House aides. He persuaded Bush to broaden the reach of enterprise zone legislation. Instead of ten zones the first year, the new Bush-Kemp proposal would start them in any city that meets the criteria (joblessness, violent crime rate, etc.). Sam Skinner, the White House chief of staff, kept Kemp at the White House on May 11 to help draft the six-part package. Kemp had been scheduled to join Bush as window dressing on a trip to Philadelphia. Kemp persuaded Bush to take a conciliatory attitude toward congressional Democrats, arguing that they're under pressure to pass something and seem genuinely interested in compromising. After Bush conferred with congressional leaders on May 12, three Cabinet secretaries were dispatched to the White House press room to brief. Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater designated Kemp the point man, the one to speak first. "The three biggest elements of the program are Kemp's," explains Fitzwater. "The president says Kemp knows what we ought to be doing. Kemp ought to be in the lead. It just seemed natural to me."

Kemp's leadership on anti-poverty and urban policy isn't in doubt. Bush's is. "If we were looking to line up aid to Russia, there's no doubt he'd go full bore," says a White House official. My guess is Bush will surprise nearly everyone in Washington by doing the same on his new urban agenda. "He doesn't really get tough until the chips are stacked high against him," the official says. "Well, they are." One sign of Bush's commitment to pressing for passage of his six initiatives came on May 11. He devoted a speech at a Republican fund-raiser to the subject, a first. A better sign came the next morning at the White House. Fitzwater went to the Oval Office at 7:15 to recommend that Bush personally unveil his package of proposals. Bush jumped at the idea. So before congressional leaders arrived to hear Bush's proposal, he presented it to a press pool, pointing to a freshly made chart. "Is this a new, new you?" a reporter asked. "No, same me," Bush replied. Not quite. •

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A co-dependent Lear.

GONERIL'S LAMENT

By Pico Iyer

See, the thing is, I come from this really dysfunctional family. I mean, the old man is just the usual raving white patriarch who's never taken the time to get in touch with his feminine side. And my sisters have no time for bonding at all—Cordelia simply goes around saying nothing, with this crazy smile on her face. Talk about denial! Even when I was growing up, I never had any positive female role models, anyone who could teach me about mothering, or mentoring. Ever heard of Mrs. Lear?

So all of us are a long way from wellness. But the way to look at it, according to my stress consultant, is that the root of the problem is my father. Just because he's a king, he thinks he owns the world. And the only counselor around is this really repressed guy called Kent who's got some kind of thing for him and is heavily into astrology.

Anyway, one day my father goes off on this whole inheritance trip—death duties can be murder around here! So suddenly all of us have to come together like we're in some kind of EST seminar, and tell him how much we love him. Talk about low self-esteem!

So Regan and I more or less reinforce him, tell him what he wants to hear, get into the whole "nuclear family" bit. But Cordelia—out to lunch, as usual—must have been told by her shrink to go with her feelings. Next thing you know, she's laying a whole number on him, and he's power-tripping like crazy.

I know you'll say this is a classic case of blame the victim. But I can tell you, my father's like a control freak with all this negative energy he hasn't worked through. So he decides to move in with about a hundred of his enablers—really into partying—and gets into this real abusive relationship with the help. I begin to feel like he's in need of a twelve-step recovery program. Finally I tell him, "Co-dependency no more!" Well, he totally freaks and takes this guilt trip thing over to my sister's house. Pretty soon we both feel like we're ready for a Children of Recovering Tyrants Workshop. It's like he's only just learning how to reclaim his inner child.

Anyway, before you know it, he's off on some empowerment kick, getting in touch with his wild man. You know the scene: racing around the heath in the middle of the night, shouting at the skies and beating his chest and hanging out with some Fool who probably did a Shamanism seminar at Esalen once. Deciding all of a sudden that he's got to do some grieving, learn to access his rage. Soon he's talking to the other guys in his men's group—total flakes—as if they were philosophers.

So now we've got a father who's into this back-to-nature trip and a sister who's on her way to jail. My husband, as usual, is totally judgmental, tells me the problem is we never spend any quality time together. Every time I talk about my father, he says I'm just projecting. Our marriage counselor says we've got to learn to be friends with ourselves before we can be friends with one another. And my lawyer tells me that divorce is not a growth experience. So what can I do? I find this really cute guy—high-energy, take-charge, real centered. But as soon as my back is turned, my sister's coming on to him. Meanwhile, there's all this stuff going down—someone's knocked off my secretary, the old guy next door's gone south, Cordelia's husband's acting out. Just then, my girlfriend tells me about this holistic new book by Derek Humphrey. So I think, what the hell? It's always darkest before the dawn.

PICO IYER writes essays for *Time*. His most recent book is *The Lady and the Monk: Four Seasons in Kyoto* (Knopf).

An Asian take on L.A.

US AND THEM

By Arthur Hu

Spike Lee's vision of violence has truly become the Real Thing. Throughout the time of the conflagration in Los Angeles, I saw virtually no Asian Americans called on to explain the situation from their point of view. Yet Asians were not just victims of collateral damage; they were often a strategic target. Although much of what went on was black violence directed at Asians, the only racism that was lamented in the mainstream media was white violence against blacks.

The unfortunate timing of the mild sentence given to Soon Ja Du for shooting Latasha Harlins about a year ago in Los Angeles was a key factor in the degree of black outrage that resulted in the rioting of April 29 and 30. Activists of ill will had already spread the word that a black girl had been shot in the back by a Korean merchant over a carton of juice. They didn't mention that the woman running the store had been assaulted by the girl before she fired, or that the context for this action was widespread violence against Korean shopkeepers. Korean entrepreneurs in South-Central Los Angeles ran a 1 in 250 chance of being killed while pursuing their business last year, about the same odds as a tour of duty in Vietnam. Stretch that to a career of thirty years, and the chances go up to 1 in 16, not a much better chance of

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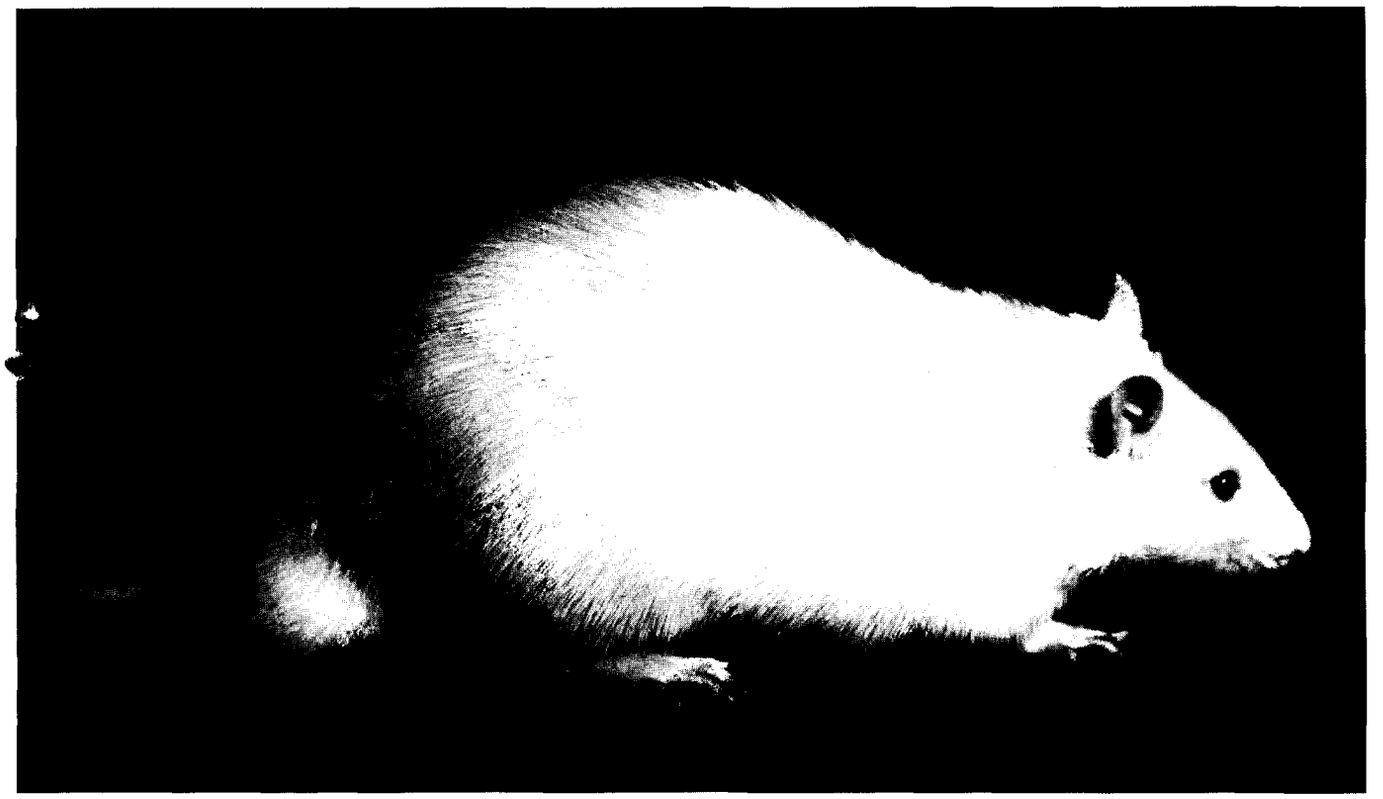

Some People Just See a Rat. We See a Cure for Cancer.

Hopefully, sooner or later there will be a cure for cancer, a vaccine against AIDS and an effective treatment for Alzheimer's.

And when these breakthroughs occur it will be thanks to the rats and other laboratory animals that are so vital to medical research.

Because, historically, no cure, no vaccine, no revolution in surgery was ever discovered without animal research.

Today, however, there is a movement afoot that would ban the use of laboratory animals in the war against disease. This so-called "animal rights" movement believes that animals and humans are equal, and that "even if animal research resulted in a cure for AIDS, they would be against it." In their war against biomedical research, the animal rights activists use disinformation, pressure tactics and active terrorism.

The notion that a rat and a child are equal is an obscenity to most Americans. The belief that research which can save the lives of millions of humans (and yes, even animals) should be paralyzed, is an outrage against all living creatures.

Americans for Medical Progress salutes the dedicated men and women working to conquer the illnesses that plague mankind.

Americans for Medical Progress exists to provide grassroots support for the scientists who are the front line in the war against disease.

More importantly, we've formed the Americans for Medical Progress Educational Foundation to spearhead the critical effort to educate American opinion leaders and citizens about the need for animal research. Because society cannot allow itself to be manipulated by a handful of zealots who would equate the life of a rat with that of a child.

You are invited to join the Americans for Medical Progress Educational Foundation. Your membership will send a clear and unequivocal message to caring people everywhere that human life and the quality of human life are the number one priority of every sane, sensitive and thinking individual.

Americans for
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Research Saves Lives

For more information, or to become a member, please contact Americans for Medical Progress Educational Foundation at

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survival than their young black male customers. Around eight out of ten Korean stores were burned or looted in the riots, 100 in Koreatown alone. Three of the fifty-one killed were Asian—a high proportion when you consider that Asians constitute less than 0.5 percent of the population in South-Central Los Angeles.

Racist remarks were parlayed without comment by the various local and national news media and talk shows, as if one kind of racism were morally appropriate and another weren't: "Those Koreans don't respect us.... Those whites are subhuman, they don't even belong here.... The Koreans were part of the system, and so are you!... Burn the Chinese stores! Fuck the Koreans, we're glad they're gone.... Well, burning an apartment is a tragedy, but the liquor stores had to go.... We're sick of 400 years of oppression by Koreans!"

It is not as if Korean-Americans are far more economically powerful than black Americans. Even though household incomes were close to the national average, extended and intact families meant that Koreans in 1980 (the latest Census figures available) had a per capita income of only $5,544, which was closer to the $4,545 for blacks than the $7,808 for whites. The average small store brings in no more money than a good union manufacturing job. The difference is that Koreans have the highest number of self-employed of any ethnic group, and their willingness to work very hard for very little money gives them a competitive advantage in inner-city neighborhoods where supermarkets fear to tread. Blacks have also generally ceded the worst entry-level jobs such as janitors and maids to immigrants. Thus Latinos and Asians toil at subminimum wages, living in tiny cubicles and shacks in order to send money to their families in the old country, while many black teens turn their noses at jobs at McDonald's or Safeway at double the minimum wage.

One-hundred-and-twelve-hour work weeks, plus unpaid family labor, is common among Koreans. Many have college degrees that won't get them decent jobs because of discrimination or language problems. Asian students who live in housing projects and go to inner-city schools rack up grades, test scores, and graduation rates that are the envy of white suburban students. Koreans don't get special loans; they just work three jobs, save, sacrifice, and borrow from loan pools built by family and friends. It seems that Koreans are despised solely because they are the smallest local representative of the "capitalist system," or are of a different race and culture.

Many Asian Americans feel frustrated by the double standards involved in the reporting of criminal cases. In the King case, the race of the policemen, Rodney King, and his jurors was considered relevant. But consider the case of Gregory Calvin Smith, a black man who raped twenty women in San Jose, California. Half his victims were Asian. He got a death sentence for raping and shooting a Japanese exchange student. Yet Smith's picture was never shown; mention of his race was omitted in every article and local TV story. If the King case had been covered without reference to race, the L.A. riot may never have erupted. It's good the Asians don't have an Al Sharpton who can exploit such situations, but Asian resentment and confusion is inevitable when even Asian American leaders minimize the existence of anti-Asian prejudice when it is perpetrated by black Americans.

Many residents of South-Central already realize how, as one told the *Los Angeles Times*, "those damn fools destroyed our neighborhood for nothing." It's not the Koreans who now have no place to cash their checks and no place to buy their groceries. When the supermarket chains leave for good, many will wish for the Koreans to return.

My son is eight months old today. I'm going to teach him not to hate, not to kill, not to lie, and not to steal. I will show him how to fend for himself and his family by using his own resources and industry. I pray that one day everybody else can do the same. I know it's harder when you are poor, but there is no other way. Because only when that day comes will riots like those we've just witnessed in L.A. be a distant memory.

ARTHUR HU is a columnist for the San Francisco-based *Asian Week.*

Why Clinton's no draft-dodger.

NOT SO SLICK

By Michael Mandelbaum

What has happened to Bill Clinton since the New Hampshire primary bears an unhappy resemblance to Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest.* In that film Cary Grant plays Roger Thornhill, a businessman who is mistaken for "George Kaplan," a nonexistent character created by the CIA to trap a gang of spies. Thornhill's efforts to set matters straight only reinforce the spies' conviction that he is Kaplan. He dodges one peril after another until, in the final reel, the CIA gets the gang and Grant gets Eva Marie Saint.

"Slick Willie," the smooth-talking, corner-cutting Southern politician whom much of the electorate takes Clinton to be, is like George Kaplan. He doesn't exist. How, then, was he created? (First, a disclosure: I am a friend of Clinton's and have been active in his campaign.) I believe much of this problem stems from the widespread view that Clinton has lied about his encounter with the draft in 1969. That belief is incorrect, as news accounts from the period reveal.

The heart of the matter is Clinton's joining, then leaving, a Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program at the University of Arkansas Law School. Albert Hunt writes in the April 29 *Wall Street Journal* that Clin-

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aft WHERE WE STAND

The LA Riots: Looking for Cause and Effect

BY ALBERT SHANKER, PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

Like a lot of other Americans, I couldn't believe it when George Bush blamed the Los Angeles riots on the failed liberal social programs of the 1960s. Which of these programs does he hold responsible?

He can't be talking about the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which assured the right of people of all races, and particularly African-Americans, to register and vote. That is now a part of our political heritage. And he surely doesn't mean Aid to Families with Dependent Children or Model Cities because AFDC was started under Franklin Roosevelt and Model Cities, which never really got off the ground, has been dead for a number of years.

Several very important education programs were started during that period: Head Start, Chapter 1 and the program of loans and grants that helps finance college education for a large number of students. But there's no sign that President Bush considers any of them failures—or even if he does, that he thinks they encourage arson, looting and violence. President Bush has agreed to continue funding all of them, and he has talked about increasing funding for Head Start. Indeed, if there is anything wrong with Head Start, it's that it never has been sufficiently funded. Research shows us that, while a quality Head Start program does not necessarily make students into super achievers, kids who attend one do stay in school longer, have fewer arrests and are less likely to become teenage mothers. Who knows what difference twenty years of full funding for excellent Head Start programs in Los Angeles might have made? (And who knows what future difference the Family and Medical Leave Act, which would allow a father or mother to stay home with a child who needs attention, might have made? That is, if George Bush, who also blamed the riots on lack of family values, had not vetoed it.)

Is President Bush hinting that the Peace Corps destroyed the moral fiber of poor people?

Is President Bush perhaps hinting that the Peace Corps or the Job Corps has destroyed the independence and the moral fiber of poor people? I doubt it. And Bush doesn't mean the Legal Services program, which Ronald Reagan tried to get rid of and he saved. Medicare and Medicaid? The President has talked about how he wants to cut costs, but he hasn't said that he wants to end these programs or claimed that they could lead to rioting.

When someone talks in general about liberal social programs of the 1960s, people may have an uneasy feeling that these programs were ineffective or wasteful. But when you look at a list—which would include, for example, the Voting Rights Act, Chapter 1, college loans and grants, Medicare and Medicaid—most of the programs on it are ones of which Americans are proud.

George Bush will have to look long and hard to find specific programs he can blame for what happened in LA. He is simply politicizing a national tragedy. But while he looks around to identify a few programs to name and blame, he might consider whether it is the programs that have failed or the federal government that has failed by not supporting them.

Over the past 10 years, the federal government has shifted responsibility for doing all kinds of things to state and local governments while withdrawing the money needed to do them. Direct aid to the cities has dropped more than 60 percent since 1981. This means that federal aid, which made up 18 percent of city budgets in 1980, now makes up only 6.4 percent. And the states, which have lost federal revenue themselves, have not compensated the cities for these losses.

As a result, education is squeezed; social services of all kinds are squeezed; even criminal justice is squeezed. There are now fewer cops on the beat than there were at the beginning of the 1980s. Cities can't afford them, despite the fact that crime has increased and become more violent. So law-abiding citizens, who are in the overwhelming majority even in the poorest neighborhoods, have to make do with less protection. The Republicans talk a lot about law and order; if they really mean it, they should provide federal dollars for policemen.

There's no excuse for the arson, looting and rioting. The people who did these things were not thinking about Rodney King. They represented a very small percentage of Los Angeles' poor citizens. All the people in LA who had their TVs turned on could see with their own eyes that stores were wide open, policemen were nowhere to be seen and loot was there for the taking. The surprise is that such a small handful took advantage of this opportunity. And though Los Angeles' African-American citizens, like nearly all Americans, were appalled by the Rodney King verdict, very few of them participated—a fact that has been little noted. Indeed, the majority of the rioters were not black.

Does anybody really think that what we saw in Los Angeles can be pinned on the programs of John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson or Martin Luther King, Jr.? And that the Republicans who have occupied the White House for all but one term since Lyndon Johnson stepped down have had nothing to do with the condition of our cities? What we saw was not a sign that we have spent too much money on people in cities. Given the fact that relatively few people participated in the riot, it might be a sign that the programs of the 1960s worked. It is certainly a warning about how expensive it will be to neglect urban America in the future.

In Philosophy I, I learned that it is very difficult to establish causal relations. But one of the hints the professor gave us was that the cause is likely to be close to the effect.

Mr. President, if you are looking for the cause of what went on in Los Angeles, the 80s are a lot closer than the 60s.

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ton's explanation of why he did so "strains credulity.... Mr. Clinton said he withdrew from the ROTC program in the fall of 1969 ... because of guilt over the fact that he 'had four high-school classmates who were killed' in Vietnam. The fact is that he withdrew after draft calls were curtailed in anticipation of the December 1, 1969, introduction of the lottery system."

This is the crucial charge: that Clinton maneuvered to minimize his chance of being drafted, using the ROTC deferment as his protection for several months, then giving it up when he knew he would have several additional months of immunity during which the lottery would be held, and that it might spare him altogether. Such a course was not illegal, but it is inconsistent with Clinton's statement that he relinquished his ROTC deferment out of principle, not as a tactic for evading military service.

The facts bear out Clinton's account. His friends at Oxford have verified them, but they also can be confirmed independently. The chronology is all important. On September 19, 1969, President Nixon announced that draft calls for November and December would, in effect, be canceled, with the October quota of 29,000 spread out over the last three months of that year. On October 1 he announced that graduate students—like Clinton—could complete that academic year without being inducted, although they could still be drafted.

Sometime in late September or early October Clinton withdrew from the Arkansas ROTC program by calling his stepfather in Arkansas and asking him to contact ROTC officials. On October 30 his draft board in Hot Springs reclassified Clinton 1-A, that is, eligible for induction. (He had already passed his physical.) On December 1 the draft lottery was held. Clinton received a high number—311—that ultimately kept him out of the Army.

These facts by themselves are not inconsistent with the view that Clinton withdrew from the ROTC program "in anticipation" of the lottery, although even in that case he would have had no assurance of receiving a high enough number to escape the military. But that view is wrong because it is inconsistent with another fact. The lottery was authorized only on November 26, 1969, well *after* Clinton gave up his ROTC deferment. Until shortly before that date, there was no reason to believe a lottery would be introduced soon, if ever.

On May 13, 1969, Nixon proposed a lottery to replace the existing draft system in which the oldest eligible men were drafted first; but the administration did not introduce legislation to create one until August 19. The proposal was controversial in Congress. On October 1, at about the time Clinton was giving up his 2-D deferment, Representative F. Edward Hebert, chairman of the subcommittee considering the proposal, "told associates that there was no chance that the administration's bill [to establish the lottery] would become law this year," according to *The New York Times.*

On October 16 the House Armed Services Committee approved the proposal "unexpectedly," according to the *Times,* but the article went on to report that "it was doubtful that the Senate committee would get around to acting on the lottery proposal this year. Furthermore, if [the bill] went to the Senate with a simple lottery proposal, the door would be opened to a long debate on other draft reform proposals," something that the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, John Stennis, Democrat of Mississippi, wanted to avoid.

On October 30, the day Clinton was being reclassified 1-A, the *Times* reported that "the Senate is almost certain to rebuff the Nixon administration by postponing until next year consideration of reforms in the military draft, including the establishment of a lottery system for selecting draftees." In November, however, Stennis managed to fashion a compromise with a group of senators, who wanted more extensive changes in the draft system. The Senate passed the lottery on November 19, and Nixon signed it a week later.

The impression that Clinton was slick about the draft rests on the belief that he maneuvered cleverly to avoid conscription in the second half of 1969, then dissembled about it twenty-three years later. But when Clinton gave up his ROTC deferment, the draft calls had not yet ended, and he could not be confident that a lottery would be established in time to allow him to avoid the draft. He had every reason to believe the draft would proceed in 1970 as before. He had already received an induction notice the previous spring in Oxford, which his draft board had told him he could ignore, since it had arrived after the induction date, and the board had given him permission to finish the academic year. But it was made clear that he was at the top of the draft list. Clinton, in short, had every reason to expect that, without a deferment, he would be drafted in early 1970. Thus the charge that Clinton maneuvered to avoid the draft is flatly wrong. Giving up a deferment at the time and under the circumstance that he did so was emphatically not a promising way to avoid the Army, and no reasonable person could have thought it was.

Why, then, is the charge so widely believed? For one thing, it is intuitively plausible. Clinton opposed the Vietnam War. He did not wish to fight in it. He joined, then left, an ROTC program. He did not serve in the military. It is easy to assume a purposeful connection among those facts, although there is none.

There are also, I think, deeper reasons that the country has not accepted Clinton's story. The Hunt column touches on one of them, writing about the thousands of other young men, including Vice President Dan Quayle, who acted as Clinton is alleged to have done. Thousands of us did opt for a variety of legal alternatives to the draft in order to stay out of a war we did not wish to fight. Yet almost none of us acted as Bill Clinton did. That is, almost nobody who could avoid it shared the risk of conscription with those insufficiently wealthy, shrewd, or credentialed to evade it by legal means.

Many of us have since felt a sense of unease about this, understanding that we benefited from a system

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that was not entirely fair, one that distributed the burden of the war unevenly across class and racial lines. And if Clinton's account of what he did in 1969 stirs vague feelings of guilt among those who faced the draft in the late 1960s, it has, I think, evoked disbelief on the part of those too young to have done so. Their experience, after all, has hardly been filled with examples of people acting out of disinterested, even noble, motives.

All of this, I suspect, has contributed to the creation of "Slick Willie." The logic goes something like this: "I didn't deal with the draft on the basis of principle. Nobody I know did. Dan Quayle certainly didn't, and I know he isn't telling the truth about the subject. So Bill Clinton's account of what he did about the draft and why simply cannot be true." But it is.

MICHAEL MANDELBAUM teaches at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and directs the East-West Project at the Council on Foreign Relations.

How to swallow socialized medicine.

SPOONFUL OF SUGAR

By Adrian Wooldridge

To foreigners the American health care system is a basket case. To middle-income Americans it is a source of perpetual anxiety. And to economists a regime that eats 13 percent (and fast rising) of GNP but leaves more than 30 million people without medical cover is a study in inefficiency. To the man in the White House bunker, however, everything is hunky-dory.

President Bush is particularly scathing about the British penchant for socialized medicine. Yet if he took a few moments to discuss the recent reorganizations of the British National Health Service (NHS) with his buddy John Major, he might learn two interesting lessons. Lesson one: public provision and market mechanisms are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Lesson two: conservatives can restructure public services (however popular) and take on interest groups (however powerful) without committing political suicide.

The aim of the NHS reforms is to use market mechanisms to improve a publicly provided service. The reformed NHS is still paid for by the taxpayer and is (largely) free at the point of delivery. This ensures that access to care remains universal while allowing a rigorous control of costs. (Britain still devotes only 5.8 percent of its GDP to health care, less than half that of the United States.) But within the NHS, market mechanisms ensure a more efficient use of resources and more patient-friendly services.

Establishing the new internal market required three big structural changes. The first was to introduce a split between the buyers of health care (health authorities) and the providers (hospitals and the like). In the old NHS, doctors made all the big decisions about resources: the result was pots of cash for high-tech surgery and peanuts for preventive medicine. In the reformed NHS the job of buyers is to assess the health needs of the populations and to ensure that these needs are met as efficiently as possible; the job of the providers is to compete to produce the best combination of service and cost.

The second change was to use the price mechanism to ensure that money follows the patient. In the old NHS, who got what was determined by accident and administrative fiat. This meant too much money went to fast-emptying inner cities and too little to the flourishing suburbs. More worrying still, it created an efficiency trap. Successful hospitals attracted more patients without attracting more resources; unsuccessful hospitals lost patients without losing resources.

The third change was to devolve managerial decisions to the lowest possible level. Under the old NHS doctors found that the best way to squeeze more money out of the government was to produce an endless chorus of complaints about underfunding. To silence them, the government has made them responsible for financial decisions. Hospitals are now encouraged to opt out of local health authority control and become self-governing; family doctors (GPs) can now run their own budgets.

This combination of publicly funded services and market distribution was achieved against all political odds. The story of its achievement is a hopeful case study in how administrative reform can overcome the political logjam it habitually runs into. After Margaret Thatcher's third victory in 1987, she convened a special task force to consider health care reform. The group met in secret and included just four Cabinet members. Only a handful of experts were invited to submit their opinions. The review quickly hit on the internal market idea, and, after a brief debate, also stuck with the principle of funding the NHS through general taxation. The health minister felt the market needed two dynamos if it was to work: self-governing hospitals and GPs running their own budgets. Self-government had long been a passion with a few doctors who resented the power of health bureaucrats. GP budget-holding was a bolder ideal, modeled on American HMOs.

Many influential Tories advised a low-keyed approach in introducing the reforms. Thatcher's health minister, Kenneth Clarke, ignored them. In February 1989 he launched a white paper, "Working for Patients," to a fanfare of publicity. He was prepared for a fight. But even he was surprised by how vicious the fight became.

Labour's health spokesman accused the Tories of trying to privatize the NHS. The British Medical Association, the doctors' powerful union, deployed a formidable p.r. campaign. Doctors littered their waiting rooms with leaflets and complained to the 700,000 or so patients they saw every day. The Tory House of Commons Health

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Committee warned that an internal market could destabilize the NHS. The National Audit Office argued that health authorities lacked the financial expertise to price operations. A survey of health authorities, commissioned by Clarke, said most of them were lamentably unprepared for change.

Thatcher, fearful of voter backlash, asked Clarke to put the reforms on hold. Clarke was furious; Thatcher backed down, but reshuffled Clarke and replaced him with an upper-class smoothie from the left of the party, William Waldegrave. Waldegrave told doctors what they wanted to hear—that they were doing a wonderful job and that the NHS would never be turned into anything so vulgar as a business. And he said it all in the right accent.

Thatcher then made an even more important contribution to selling the reforms: she got sacked. The voters never thought the NHS was safe in the hands of a woman who had privatized water and boasted that she used private health care to make more room in the public wards. Major reassured them with his vow that the NHS would remain in public hands as long as he was prime minister.

Meanwhile, reform continued: the aim in the first year was not a free market but a managed market. The health authorities were obliged to place contracts with the same old hospitals; the NHS trusts and GP budget-holders were tightly regulated; the introduction of per capita funding was delayed in the London area.

The result was that the introduction of the reforms in April 1991 went much more smoothly than the Tories had dared hope. Almost sixty hospitals opted out of health authority control and 300 GP practices started running their own budgets. There were no strikes in the wards, no demonstrations in the streets. The medical profession made rude gestures but failed to take decisive action; Labour Party protests failed to fire public feeling.

Why was the opposition so muted? First: the doctors' lobby, the British Medical Association, started to implode. Some doctors lost interest in the issue as soon as they'd won a generous pay raise. Others began to see the benefits of reform. Moreover, the reforms produced results. Rates for childhood immunization and screening for cervical cancer rose to record levels. Some waiting lists fell dramatically; NHS trusts started delivering more efficient and patient-friendly services. GP budget-holders became converts to the reforms: some provided better services, many negotiated better deals with local hospitals, all enjoyed a newfound sense of power.

The success of the reforms encouraged the government to take the brakes off. Beginning last month the Department of Health allowed purchasers to shop around for the best care at the best price. It allowed more hospitals to become self-governing and loosened the restrictions on GP budget holding. As the reforms gathered momentum they became more deeply entrenched. The creation of 100 more trusts and almost 300 more GP practices with their own budgets in April 1992 (in the middle of the election campaign) meant that a swath of the medical profession had a vested interest in the continuation of the reforms. And, as Labour belatedly discovered, after vigorously backing the old-style NHS during the campaign, the voters had come around too.

Is America ready to learn from the British example? Something clearly has to be done. The system not only wastes money, public as well as private, but also imposes an intolerable burden on middle-class families and leaves many lower-class ones out in the cold. Worse still: it threatens to render many firms uncompetitive as health insurance eats into profits and workers refuse to move to new jobs for fear of losing their health cover. The Democrats rightly smell a vote-winner here, if they too can find the right mix between public and private. As for George Bush, he desperately needs a chat with John Major.

ADRIAN WOOLDRIDGE is a member of the editorial staff of *The Economist.*

Are employers good for your health?

WORK-CARE

By Susan Dentzer

Here's the worst thing the Bush administration can say about the leading Democratic health care reform proposal, dubbed "play or pay": it would lead to national health insurance. Here's the worst thing you can say about President Bush's own plan, which critics call "pay and pray": it would lead to national health insurance even faster. Administration officials claim that under the Democratic plan thousands of employers would choose to pay rather than play—ponying up taxes instead of providing health insurance and "dumping" their workers into a new public insurance plan. But the truth is that Bush's own proposal—a mix of tax incentives to spread coverage among the uninsured and market-oriented measures to restrain costs—would ultimately undermine private insurance, which now covers about 165 million Americans, and intensify pressures to nationalize the whole system.

America is well down that road already: roughly 75 million people are now covered by some type of public insurance—Medicaid, Medicare, the Veterans Administration, state and local workers' insurance plans, or state programs for the uninsured. That number could get a lot bigger under the proposals now being considered. A recent study of "play or pay" by the nonpartisan Urban Institute (ordered up by Bush's Labor Department) assumed that employers would have the option of providing a comprehensive insurance package to employees who worked at least 17.5 hours a

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A view from Washington

Streamlining Drug Approvals: A Solution Whose Time Has Come

Every once in a while a truly good idea comes out of Washington, but when it's run up the flagpole there's always someone who throws mud at it. This was certainly the case with initiatives announced by the Vice-President's Council on Competitiveness for streamlining the approval process for prescription drugs.

These reforms will make new medicines available to patients an average of almost four years sooner than under the present system. They will save both lives and money. They will enhance U.S. competitiveness by reducing the regulatory burden. And they will accomplish this without jeopardizing patient safety.

Drug development is—and has to be—a long, arduous, and expensive process. Currently, according to the Council on Competitiveness, it takes an average of 9 years and 9 months to get a new medicine from the laboratory to the pharmacy—including laboratory tests, tests on patient volunteers, studies by leading medical schools and scrutiny of all available data on the medicine by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The Council on Competitiveness initiatives will cut the development and review time for drugs to treat life-threatening illnesses—and diseases for which there are currently no effective treatments—to 5 years and 6 months. For all other drugs, the waiting time will be reduced to 7 years. These steps are expected to save millions of lives and billions of dollars. Using a Tufts University study that put the average cost of developing a new drug at $231 million, the Council estimates that shaving 1.5 years off FDA review time could save $28.5 million. And for drugs to treat life-threatening illnesses, the savings would average $60 million. Giving patients access to effective medicines sooner will also save money, since drugs are the most cost-effective form of health care.

These tremendous savings in lives and money will be accomplished mainly through common sense management reforms similar to those other countries adopted years ago. These include contracting with qualified outside organizations to analyze data and conduct reviews, making better use of computers, and reducing the number—and duration—of studies required for drugs to treat life-threatening illnesses.

When the reforms were announced, late last year, patients and drug companies cheered. But naysayers almost drowned out the cheering. Objections ranged from bureaucratic turf guarding to genuine concerns that FDA might be abdicating its role as protector of the public health. Fortunately for the sake of people who need medicines as soon as they can get them, common sense and humane concerns about saving lives and avoiding suffering appear to be prevailing. At Congressional hearings, FDA Commissioner David Kessler assured lawmakers that "FDA maintains full control. The process works." Kessler also spoke in favor of the use of outside reviewers by FDA, one of the most controversial aspects of the reforms. In addition to speeding the process, using outside reviewers would, according to Kessler, help forge a "link with the science infrastructure," which is especially important since this resource-poor government agency finds it difficult to attract—and keep—top-notch scientists.

The changes will also bring the United States into sync with other industrialized nations, most of which have more streamlined drug review processes. Of the 30 new drugs approved by FDA in 1991, 18 were already available to patients in other countries. Americans have to wait an average of more than three years longer than British patients for cardiovascular drugs, for example.

For many patients, the time saved may literally mean the difference between life and death. People born with cystic fibrosis, for example, have an average life expectancy of 28 years. Scientists recently identified the gene that causes this fatal disease and hope to come up with an effective treatment soon. But unless the process for getting drugs to patients is speeded up, thousands of patients could die while an application for a drug to treat the disease awaits approval at FDA. FDA is proceeding, step by step, to implement the reforms. In doing so, the agency has the unswerving and vocal support of President Bush.

"For those bureaucrats up there on Capitol Hill and some of those special pleaders that are against everything we do in trying to move drugs out, I'm sorry," the President told reporters. "It's very important that we try to move these things out as fast as we can. That's the humane thing to do, the caring thing to do.... We're talking about something that will save lots of lives...."

As the French author Victor Hugo put it: "There is one thing stronger than all the armies in the world, and that is an idea whose time has come."

Despite the critics and naysayers, the time for streamlining the process for getting life-saving and life-enhancing drugs to patients may, at long last, have arrived.

Gerald J. Mossinghoff
President
Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association

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week or paying a payroll tax ranging from 7 percent to 9 percent to finance workers' coverage in a new public insurance plan. It concluded that thousands of small businesses would find it far cheaper to pay the tax. As a result, the new public plan would turn into a whopper: anywhere from 85 million to 105 million Americans would be enrolled (a number that includes 30 million Medicaid recipients). Add in 34 million Medicare beneficiaries, and as much as half the population would be covered by national health insurance, while the number of Americans with private coverage would shrink by as much as 26 percent.

Bush's plan relies primarily on tax credits, worth up to $3,750 for a family of four, to expand coverage among the uninsured. That won't buy much expansion, since the average family policy costs about $4,600 a year. A series of complex reforms in the small-group insurance market will supposedly lower the costs of insurance—but this is the "pray" aspect of the plan. As for cost containment, the Bush plan assumes that the millions of Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries can be herded into HMOs and similar arrangements, which seek to restrain unnecessary care and generally cost less than conventional medicine. That's a laudable goal, but one at which the government has so far failed: only about 6 percent of Medicare recipients are enrolled in HMOs, compared to almost 50 percent of workers with employer-provided coverage who are in some kind of managed care plan.

Five years after Bush's plan was enacted, in other words, millions would still be without insurance and costs would still be escalating. The result would be a steamroller of support for national health insurance.

National health insurance would be a disaster for a couple of reasons. First, government programs have a hard time saying no to those who feed off them, making it almost impossible to break through the interest-group logjam when change is needed. The fact that Medicare and Medicaid are among the last redoubts of so-called fee-for-service medicine, in which doctors are paid for everything they do, underscores the point. Physicians' efforts to offset the effect of Medicare fee cuts has led to an explosion of procedures performed on the elderly and disabled. But rather than look for ways to move Medicare beneficiaries into HMOs, Congress has crafted a Byzantine new system that has slashed fees once more, implemented fee cuts if doctors don't limit the volume of services, and in effect given fee-for-service a new lease on life. Now doctors across the country are threatening to quit treating Medicare patients, and senior citizens' groups are worried that members may lose access to needed care. Any guesses as to how long it will take Congress to hike the fees, or to junk the reforms altogether and return to unmanaged fee-for-service?

Second, penny-wise-and-pound-foolish government programs operating under budget constraints typically won't spend in the short term to save over the long haul. Public programs are perceived as superior to private health insurance because they have lower administrative costs, but that's in large part because they do less administering. Companies that process health-insurance claims for private-sector clients typically have sophisticated computer software to spot doctors who are overtreating patients. They don't bother with it for Medicare claims, because Medicare won't pay for the software—a step that would save $1 billion annually.

The only real way to forestall the nightmare that would result from public programs becoming a monopoly is to go several steps beyond play or pay and require all employers to provide insurance to workers and their dependents. That would immediately cover roughly 30 million of the estimated 36 million uninsured. Several types of coverage could be offered, including a comprehensive plan featuring things like well-baby care and a stripped-down version that paid only for catastrophic costs. Workers would be required to buy into at least the catastrophic plan; the amounts they paid toward coverage would be scaled to their incomes and would depend on which plan they selected. After a certain date—say, five years after enactment—only employers' contributions to managed care programs like HMOs would be tax-free; as it stands now, all employer contributions to health insurance are tax deductible. Subsidies could be channeled to the small businesses that would have difficulty affording coverage, and a far smaller public safety net than anticipated in play or pay would be crafted for unemployed workers and their dependents, or for others who are squeezed out of the private system.

Under such a system all employers would be motivated to search for ways to rein in costs. Health care, in short, might begin to function like a real market, as increasingly savvy purchasers shopped for the best deals. As any sophisticated health care buyer can tell you, that means finding the providers with the best track record of treating patients, since they cost the least over the long term. This has already begun to happen in small doses across the country: in Minneapolis and St. Paul, fourteen of the largest employers—including Pillsbury and Honeywell—have asked area providers to bid on a detailed contract to deliver high quality care to their 200,000 local employees.

Employers have also learned that the combination of computers and insurance claims records affords new opportunities to discover precisely who provides the best and most cost-effective medical care. Over time that will give employers a new weapon to drive ineffective or dangerous providers out of the health care system. Pennsylvania's big businesses pushed the state to create a health cost containment council, which this summer will release a study of the patient mortality rates of all surgeons performing heart bypass operations within the state. Small wonder many of the state's physicians have lobbied to kill or gut the council.

Those who object to requiring employers to provide coverage frequently cite competitiveness concerns, arguing that staggering health costs are already crippling American corporations in the global marketplace. But the onus is on them to explain the success of Japan and Germany, two countries with universal coverage in

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which employers provide insurance and put up hefty payroll taxes to help pay for it. In Japan, the countervailing force of tightfisted employers has helped to constrain physicians' fees, which are set according to a nationwide pricing system.

There are two secrets to addressing the problem of paying for health care in America. One is figuring out how to spread the risks of high cost treatment; another is figuring out how to contain those same risks. As it stands, America is loading much of the risk onto the public sector—the taxpayer—even as it allows the private sector—doctors and hospitals—to spend without restraint. The last time we did something so stupid we created the S&L scandal.

SUSAN DENTZER is chief economics correspondent for *U.S. News & World Report.*

A primer on health care reform.

THE PRESCRIPTION

By Ezekiel J. Emanuel

Distinguishing a sham treatment from a cure for our ailing health care system is no easy matter for those who don't happen to have a doctorate in health economics. The profusion of solutions now making the rounds has led to mass confusion bordering on despair. Cheer up. There are four basic rules that need to guide health care reform, rules that can distinguish useless or even damaging reforms from potentially good ones. What's more, the outlines of a practical alternative—more radical than anything yet proposed—are beginning to emerge.

The four rules are minimum requirements. Satisfying them means a plan meets the basic issues of access and cost; it doesn't mean the plan tackles secondary issues, such as distributing doctors and hospital services to rural areas and inner cities, training enough primary care physicians, balancing the demands for preventive care against disease treatment, or ensuring patient choice of physicians. But they're a start.

Rule 1: Any program to expand access to health care must be linked to cost control. Up to 40 million Americans—including almost 10 million children—lack health insurance. Getting a system that ensures universal access is no great problem. All you need is to subsidize those who can't afford insurance and force those who resist to get it. So we could simply extend Medicare coverage to all uninsured people or give them government vouchers to buy private insurance. Without cost controls, however, this would cost between $40 billion and $100 billion per year.

In 1991 the United States spent over $2,800 per person on health care, over a third more than Canada, the country with the second-highest costs. And these costs are rising fast. Per capita costs have risen by $500 in just two years. In 1987 American health care cost $500 billion, in 1991, $750 billion, and in 1995 it will exceed $1 trillion, or almost 15 percent of GNP. Old people covered by Medicare now pay a higher share of their income for health care than they did before Medicare existed. For corporations, health care costs now equal a staggering 90 percent of after-tax profits. A universal access program based upon the existing finance system clearly would increase costs still further. Not only would billions have to be added to provide for the uninsured, but added costs due to higher demand and uncontrolled health care inflation would continue.

Rule 2: One-time cost savings schemes will not substitute for controlling health care inflation. Many reform proposals address the cost problem by proposing to cut the waste out of the system. Think again. Take administrative costs. About a fifth of the American health care budget, $100 billion to $120 billion annually, is spent on administration, from insurance overhead to physician billing. Some estimates suggest that half our costs could be saved by procedures, such as uniform insurance claim forms, more use of electronic filing systems, and the like. But such cost savings are not the same as real cost controls. Cutting waste is a one-time savings: a mere dent in medical inflation. And even a whopping $60 billion savings works out to less than one year of health care inflation.

Rule 3: Cost controls mean containing inflation and limiting the use of technology. The cost problem is increasingly related to the fact that health care costs are rising much faster than inflation, consuming an ever growing percentage of GNP. Last year overall inflation was only 3.4 percent but health care inflation was more than 9 percent, and health care rose from 12.2 percent of GNP to an estimated 13.1 percent.

Two factors contribute to the higher health care inflation rate: an increasingly old population; and the introduction of new tests and therapies, with an increase in what's called the "intensity" of medical services. Inflation due to population demographics can be altered only if we're willing to ration care by age. Regardless of its ethics, however, age-based rationing would be politically impossible. Along with general inflation, this accounts for 60 to 70 percent of the annual cost increase. So controlling health care inflation relies on the 30 to 40 percent attributed to technology and the intensity of care. What's needed is not so much a limitation on R&D as limits on the clinical use of technology. Canada and European countries have imposed such limits. Limiting the number of magnetic resonance imagers, the number of cardiac operating rooms, and so on, restricts use of these high-tech services and helps hold down costs. Although these limitations of technology can affect the care given individual patients, they may not diminish the overall health of a population.

Some reform advocates claim that managed care and malpractice reform can limit technology cost increases.

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They're wrong. HMOs save money not by limiting the use of medical technology, but by reducing the number of days that patients spend in the hospital. In recent years, however, Medicare and private insurance companies have also reduced hospital stays. And HMOs—as well as conventional health insurers—lack cost controls over the other forms of technology. Sooner or later, they'll get clobbered too. In fact, they already have: since 1988 HMO costs have risen 14 percent per year.

As for proposals to reform the malpractice system, malpractice premiums consume only 1 percent of the health care budget. The real savings are supposed to come through the effect on physician behavior. By limiting malpractice awards, it is argued, physicians will stop practicing defensive medicine and cut down on treatment without lowering the quality of care. But malpractice reform doesn't alter many other factors behind unnecessary treatment. More care leads to higher pay. And doctors react to their patients' demands for the latest technology. Finally, there is the physician's simple concern to do what's best for the patient. In any case, malpractice reform could save at most only $15 billion a year, less than 3 percent of the health care budget.

Some argue that money could be saved by lowering the salaries of physicians and other health care workers. But physician salaries account for a mere 10 percent of overall health care costs. Thus even a 10 or 20 percent reduction in salaries would lower costs a mere 1 or 2 percent. Lowering salaries might also exacerbate shortages of nurses and other health care professionals.

Rule 4: An independent board should have authority to impose a national health care budget. The president and Congress are subject to conflicting forces on health care. On one side are rising costs that consume more and more federal money. On the other are constituents who balk at cuts or limits on care. Over the last decade Medicare has reflected this conflict: the president and Congress have deeply cut hospital and physician reimbursement, such as prospective payments to hospitals, but made no major cuts in services. This approach has not controlled overall Medicare cost increases. Indeed, health care costs have increased from about 10 percent of the federal budget in 1980 to more than 15 percent in 1990. At current rates health care will consume almost 25 percent of the budget by the end of the century.

Only an independent board, insulated from special interest groups, much like the Federal Reserve, could implement real cost control. This board probably should not have the authority to administer the health care system or to determine benefits; these matters are better addressed at the state or local level. The board, however, should have the power to set overall costs.

How do various proposals now being debated comply with these rules?

The Bush Plan: It breaks all the rules. It aims to extend care to all by a mixture of tax credits for the poor, tax deductions for the self-employed, and making it easier for small businesses to buy insurance. But Richard Darman at Office of Management and Budget—the plan's primary architect—didn't aim for universal coverage: at least 2 million and maybe up to 5 million people would be unable to afford insurance and be without government programs. And by relying on the current health insurance system, Bush's plan would exacerbate the cost problem. The plan is estimated to cost $100 billion over five years. This figure doesn't include what states would have to ante up for cuts in federal Medicaid funding. With Bush's plan, health costs would likely soar.

The plan contains the most extensive endorsement of managed care and malpractice reforms for cost control; it would end restrictions on managed care programs and encourage states to enroll the poor in managed care. It would encourage use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and set limits on reimbursing for pain and suffering in malpractice cases. This doesn't add up to much. Finally, the plan ignores the fact that power to impose cost controls needs to be removed from the market. In health care, the buyer-seller relationship will always be loaded. The patient's ignorance, the uncertainty of most cases, and the fact that someone besides the patient pays most of the bills encourage greater use of services. As the 1980s showed, the more unregulated health care becomes and the more for-profit providers compete, the higher the costs.

The HealthAmerica Plan. Four prominent Democratic senators who have long backed health care reform—George Mitchell, Edward Kennedy, Donald Riegle, and Jay Rockefeller—have proposed HealthAmerica. More substantive than Bush's plan, it fulfills rule 2, and part of rules 1 and 4, but ultimately fails to develop real cost controls.

HealthAmerica is a so-called "play or pay" plan in which employers must provide their workers with insurance or contribute to a publicly administered fund that provides coverage. Americare is the name given by the senators to the public program that would replace Medicaid and cover those not insured through employers. Standards for benefits and services for Americare would be established at the federal level, although programs would be administered at the state level. To ensure that Americare would not be overutilized, private insurance premiums would be lowered by changing from a risk-rating system, in which the healthy pay less and the sick are priced out of the market, to a community-based system, in which all pay the same rate. Like the Bush plan, HealthAmerica would adjust rules to encourage cooperation among small businesses in buying insurance. To address one of the main problems of Medicaid—that payments to hospitals and physicians are often lower than the cost of providing services—Americare payments would be at or above Medicare levels. While the plan would guarantee universal access, play or pay relies on the current system to provide care.

The HealthAmerica proposal does have some useful savings schemes: cutting administrative costs by standardizing claims forms, setting up consortiums of small insurers to provide fewer payers and less paperwork, reforming the insurance market for small businesses. It would also encourage managed care and malpractice

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CONSUMER CHOICE
A NATIONAL HEALTH SYSTEM FOR ALL AMERICANS

Teddy Has It.
Rosty Has It.
Jay Rockefeller Has It.
George Mitchell Has It.

But most Americans don't.

What do these politicians have that other American's don't, but should? The answer is a health benefits system that allows them to choose among dozens of competing health-care insurers and providers, works with a minimum of regulation, is very, very popular, and because it relies on the principles of choice and competition, has successfully controlled costs.

The system is the Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB) Program, which covers nine million federal employees and retirees, including all members of Congress.

With minor modifications, an FEHB-type system could be expanded to cover all Americans. In fact, the Heritage Foundation's Consumer Choice Health Plan is based on the same principles: choice and competition.

While President Bush's health-care reform plan has helped reshape the debate over health care, it doesn't go far enough. As The Wall Street Journal put it recently: "The resulting Bush plan lacks the imagination of the innovative market reforms like those proposed by the Heritage Foundation."

Columnist Michael Kinsley, writing in The New Republic and The Washington Post, added: "The Heritage proposal should have great appeal to principled liberals, as well as principled conservatives."

All 535 members of Congress enjoy the benefits of consumer choice in health care. If it's good enough for them, surely it's good enough for all Americans.

The Heritage Foundation

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reform, although less emphatically than the Bush plan.

HealthAmerica also partly fulfills rule 4 by setting up an independent Federal Health Expenditure Board to set national, regional, and state spending goals and to recommend health insurance and payment rates to achieve them. Unfortunately, the powers to "recommend rates" wouldn't be binding on providers and purchasers, so they would have virtually no teeth. The plan's main flaws, however, lie in the area of cost control. According to the senators, costs are driven by uninsured costs being passed to the insured; unnecessary care of up to 15 percent of all costs; administrative waste; and open-ended reimbursement. The first problem doesn't increase costs but only affects their distribution. Solving the next three problems would reduce costs but wouldn't cut the underlying health care inflation rate. The only gestures toward reining in technology-driven cost increases are proposals to develop practice guidelines for physicians and expand research in technology assessment. The likely impact of this is quite limited. Because HealthAmerica relies on the current medical care system and is unable to confront the problem of technology, it's unlikely to limit cost increases.

The Kerrey Health USA Plan. Though it would satisfy rules 1, 2, and 3, Kerrey's plan would generate significant pressure on Congress to undermine the independent board by tinkering with the health care budget. To preserve patients' freedom to choose their own doctors, provision of actual care in the Kerrey plan would be dispersed. Within each state care would be provided by plans, whether HMOs, private insurance programs, or employer-based programs, as well as by a newly created public fee-for-service plan. These private and public plans would be required to provide a uniform package of services stipulated by a new National Health Care Commission. The state would pay each plan a "capitation" fee for each patient enrolled to cover all required services. The private plans would be prohibited from charging additional costs or adding co-payments and other cost-sharing mechanisms beyond a minimal amount. And they wouldn't be allowed to exclude anyone from coverage because of pre-existing medical conditions.

The Kerrey plan would centralize all finances into a single payer. Medicare, Medicaid, and all other government programs would go; businesses and individuals would no longer buy private insurance. Taxes that go toward Medicare and other programs would be supplemented by a new 5 percent payroll tax, new taxes on 85 percent of Social Security benefits, and other taxes pooled into a federal health care trust fund. The government would distribute money to states, which, in turn, would pay private and public health plans, which would pay physicians and hospitals for services. Fees would be set by negotiations between the states and the physicians and hospitals. All plans, public and private, would pay the same state-set fee. There would be two other sources of funds. A "prevention account" would help cover preventive services and promotion. A "capital account" would pay for expanding and modernizing hospitals.

The plan claims to save money by cutting administrative waste. It wouldn't much. Though it would end the cost of marketing and insurance underwriting, the elaborate finance cascade it would also create, passing money through so many hands, would impose extra costs. But, unlike the other plans, it does target technology as a culprit. For hospitals, Health USA would use the capital account to restrict the dissemination of high-tech, high-cost interventions. Furthermore, there would be no erosion of these limitations by outlawing competing private insurance.

Health USA almost ensures the development of pressure to override the budget limits. A National Health Care Commission would be entrusted to generate an annual budget for the country and to determine the contributions to each state. However, to satisfy the constitutional requirement that ultimately Congress must vote the federal budget and allocate funds, this budget would only be a recommendation to Congress, which would have final power to pass or change the board's recommendations. And because people would not be permitted to purchase additional insurance or otherwise circumvent the limits and waiting lists of a budgeted system, lobbying Congress would be the only way to expand benefits. The Kerry plan would expose health care finances to intense interest group pressures and political bargaining.

Two points become clear in reviewing these plans. Incremental changes are likely to perpetuate the problems of the existing system, and only deep reform is likely to solve the real problems of access and cost. Second, controlling technologically-driven advances and the intensity of care is vital to reform. We Americans love technology; we invest billions in biomedical research, the media publicize the latest breakthroughs, patients demand the latest techniques. Yet the widespread use of high tech is the chief culprit behind the rise in costs.

So what's the solution? My proposal hopes to meet rules 1 through 4: a universal, cost-controlling health service. It's a community-based voucher system with the following rough structure. It would give each citizen a government-backed voucher, to be used in community health plans, which would coordinate the care. The community health plans couldn't discriminate against patients based on age, race, and sex or based on pre-existing conditions, such as cancer or HIV. And they shouldn't be able to impose high co-payment provisions to exclude the poor. (Minimal co-payments may be desirable, as studies have shown they decrease use of certain services.) Eligible community plans might include health insurance plans, HMOs, and neighborhood health centers. They'd either coordinate care with hospitals, physicians, nursing homes, home health services, etc., or provide such services with their own physicians and facilities. These community plans would redeem the vouchers for payment from the government. This resembles the arrangement in Germany, where 1,145 sickness funds provide 88 percent of all care. In the German system, funding is derived from payroll taxes, and each sickness fund negotiates payments and benefits with physi-

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POPULATION — OUR CHALLENGE TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNITY

Many of the major environmental organizations have come to believe that U.S. population growth imperils their own goals.

We agree.

The problem is **how do you stop population growth**? Just stating the goal is hardly enough. Family planning by itself is not enough if women want more than two children.

U.S. population is growing about 25 million each decade. Fertility has been rising, and so has immigration. At recent rates, **we will pass 400 million around 2050**. This growth imperils our environment and resources, increases our dependence on imported oil, makes the transition to a benign energy system more difficult, leads to a more crowded land, complicates the problems of the cities, and makes it harder for our unskilled youth to find jobs.

Far from addressing the issue, **Congress and the President seem wedded to growth.** The President, in his State of the Union message, called repeatedly for growth to escape the present recession. Yet runaway growth — by another name — is cancer, and no material growth can be sustained forever on a finite planet.

Just three things determine population growth: **fertility, migration, and — when things get bad enough — mortality**. Our welfare, health care and taxation systems already encourage fertility (though nobody really planned it that way). **Yet the President and his putative Democratic opponents in this election year have been competing to offer better tax breaks for more children**.

For two decades every immigration "reform" has raised legal immigration, and Congress is usually ready to suspend the existing laws to legalize the presence of those here illegally — or those who want to come. Witness Senator Kennedy's "Irish relief act" of 1990, or his present proposal to forestall the deportation of Haitians. Or the special measures to allow whole groups or classes from some twenty countries to qualify as refugees or stay here legally. **Our short-term politics are moving us in the wrong long term direction.**

NPG believes that

◆ **fertility** can only be influenced, in a free society, by persuading women to want fewer children. The national goal should be "**stop at two**."

◆ **immigration** must be brought into a rough balance with emigration, so that it does not contribute to population growth.

We must, as a nation, learn to think of the population implications when we make our policies and laws. To be specific:

— **Welfare.** Job creation programs will bring down fertility by giving young women a sense of purpose and self-worth, as direct welfare will not. Welfare benefits, where possible, should focus on the children more than the parent. Creches. Food and health programs. Head Start. A child needs a good start, even if it is the eighth child. If the mother is the beneficiary, as in AFDC, the money may go astray, and why should she work, anyway? If she does, she may lose perks such as her own health care.

— **Taxation.** Our structure of deductions and tax credits should be reworked to reward those who have no more than two children.

— **Housing.** We should consider limiting public housing to two bedrooms. Encourage local governments to institute a graduated tax on larger accommodations, to create an incentive to keep families small.

— **Leadership.** We need to enlist political and social leaders and "role models" to spread the message that two is beautiful and three is bad.

◆◆◆◆◆

With such a program, we believe that the nation could set out on the road to a less crowded land and a happier relationship with the natural world in which we all live.

◆◆◆◆◆

NPG will undoubtedly modify these proposals and generate others, as we progress on the learning curve. The point is that it takes specific actions such as these, revolutionary as some of them may sound, to translate abstract views about population into concrete action.

◆◆◆◆◆

... AND NOW THE CHALLENGE: If you belong to an organization that calls for a halt to population growth, but does not agree with these proposals, what do **they** propose to do?

Ask them.

If you agree with us, and if you believe that the time has come to do something about population growth rather than just bemoan it, we invite you to join **NPG**. **We are the only organization that calls for a smaller U.S. and world population and for specific measures to achieve those goals.**

We hope to hear from you.

NPG is a nonprofit, national membership organization established in 1972. Contributions to **NPG** *are tax deductible. To become a member and receive our current and future publications, please send us your check today.*

Yes, I want to become a member of **NPG** *and help you work toward a smaller U.S. population. I enclose my check for annual membership dues.*

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cian associations and individual hospitals.

Defining the benefits that citizens should receive is much more controversial. Most proposals, like Kerrey's Health USA plan, aim for a uniform national benefits package and either specify minimal services or leave it to a federal board to designate a uniform benefits package applicable to all health plans in the country. There is a strong case, however, that defining types of medical services that citizens receive should be made locally, within each of the community plans actually providing care.

In all likelihood, different plans would therefore offer different packages of services, and citizens would have to choose among them. For instance, an HMO might restrict patients' freedom to choose their own physicians in return for more benefits, such as cheaper medications, and dental coverage. Conversely, more traditional insurance plans might cover fewer services while guaranteeing choice among physicians. Some plans might stress preventive care and exclude high-tech services such as organ transplants, while others might cover transplants but not some preventive services. To ensure that residents of inner cities and rural areas can turn their vouchers into actual services, some monies beyond the vouchers might be allocated to foster community health centers, rural health cooperatives, and the like.

If the members wish, community health plans should be allowed to supplement the value of the vouchers by large patient contributions to provide more benefits. To ensure equity, these contributions would have to be made on a sliding scale according to income. By this redistributive mechanism, patients in health plans could collectively decide to spend more on health care than the voucher value without creating a two-tier system. Unlike Kerry's Health USA plan, a system in which voters could pay more for wider coverage would avoid the lobbying of Congress to override the budget limits and increase the voucher values.

Such a diversity of benefits, in which neighbors could have different plans and not be entitled to the same treatment for the same disease, would be just if citizens could participate through some democratic procedures in deciding which services would be offered and which excluded. Such participation by patients in determining benefits is not unprecedented; it already exists in many community health centers and some HMOs.

The vouchers should have two special characteristics. First, they could have different values. Older patients might have higher value vouchers; so could residents of inner cities and rural areas, in order to induce community health plans into those areas. Second, there's a strong argument that vouchers should extend for five- or ten-years with options for switching plans if necessary. This would cultivate long-term physician-patient relationships. It would also encourage investment in preventive medicine, risk reduction, and screening services where benefits take time to accrue. And it would discourage patients from switching plans to obtain more extensive services for a newly diagnosed disease.

To create a community-based voucher system would require shifting monies currently spent on government and private health programs into a federal trust fund—along the lines of the Kerrey plan. Second, since businesses and individuals would no longer buy health insurance or subscribe to managed care plans, the equivalent amounts of money could be taxed and put in the trust fund. The important point is that this system should not consume an ever-growing proportion of GNP. Thus we should set the cumulative value of the vouchers to the level we're now spending on health care, about $750 billion per year and an average voucher value of $2,8[illegible]0. Annual increases would be tied to the general inflation level.

The community-based voucher system would have two levels of administration. On one level, there would be community plans responsible either for directly providing care or for coordinating care. On a second level, there would be a national board whose members would be nominated by the president to serve for five-year terms. The board would establish the health care budget, set voucher values, and disburse actual funds in exchange for vouchers.

This plan fulfills the four rules. Though it might strike some as utopian or too radical to implement, it needs only moderate change in administration and very little in actual health care delivery. It also extricates the government and insurance companies from micromanaging health care decisions. Mandated second opinions for surgery, precertification for hospitalization, utilization reviews, and all the other intrusive cost controls devised over the last few years would no longer be necessary.

By granting community health plans the authority to allocate funds, this plan also diffuses political pressures to increase funding. Since money not spent on some services would be available to provide other benefits, members would have an incentive to scrutinize the worthiness of the services available. If members felt that providing dialysis to patients over 65 was not worthwhile, they could restrict dialysis and spend the money on other services, such as prenatal care or cancer screening. Any rationing of services, whether by age or by cost effectiveness, as is being proposed in Oregon, would be a decision voted by the patients, not one made by bureaucrats. This should appeal to patients and advocates of greater patient involvement in health care policies. And each plan would have the option of supplementing the value of vouchers and offering a wider range of services. This should appeal to politicians squeezed between budget limits and constituent pressures.

No doubt this system is not the only—or necessarily the best—reform option that exists. But unlike many others under consideration, it realistically confronts the thorniest problem: how to provide universal coverage without impossible costs.

EZEKIEL J. EMANUEL, an oncologist and medical ethicist at Harvard Medical School, is the author of *The Ends of Human Life* (Harvard University Press).

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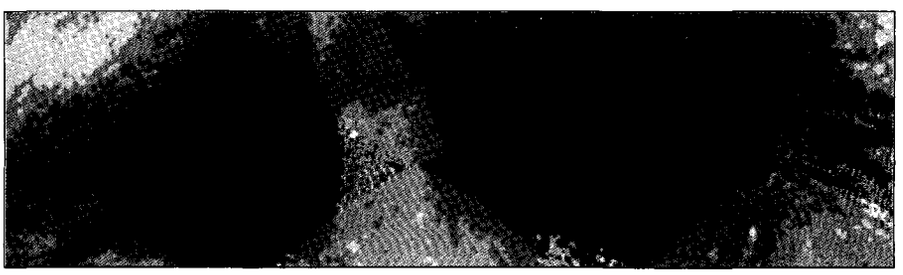
THE ODD COUPLE

By Mark Hosenball

Six days after Saddam Hussein's troops crossed the border into Kuwait, George Bush boldly compared Iraqi actions to Hitler's "blitzkrieg" against Germany's neighbors. This was a startling turnabout. Until then, despite repeated intelligence warnings and overt threats by Saddam against his neighbors, the president had been energetically pursuing a long-standing U.S. policy of appeasement toward Iraq. From 1983 until only days before diplomatic relations ruptured, the United States was one of Saddam's principal financial backers. The massive financial aid, comprising billions of dollars' worth of loan guarantees, continued long after it became apparent that Saddam was building an ambitious, menacing military machine.

In hindsight, the extent to which the Bush and Reagan administrations collaborated in Saddam's ruinous military delusion is appalling. The State Department and the National Security Council encouraged American companies to sell "dual-use" technology to Saddam that helped advance his quest for intercontinental missiles. Secret government documents hint that high-ranking officials turned a blind eye or gave tacit encouragement when Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and, in all likelihood, Jordan schemed to arm Iraq using American hardware. To help Saddam make effective use of his modern weapons, the Reagan and Bush administrations fed him U.S. intelligence secrets. With Bush's help, Washington even offered him advice on military strategy.



Moreover, top government officials ignored or buried evidence that Saddam's intentions toward his neighbors and the United States were malign and that his nuclear ambitions were well advanced. Officials who challenged the hand Washington was extending to Iraq were pressured to toe the line and penalized when they didn't. Repeatedly some of the most senior officials, including Bush and Secretary of State James Baker, intervened when more cautious voices objected. And when this policy finally imploded, some of the officials most deeply implicated attempted to cover up their more egregious follies. They have stonewalled, dissembled, and even altered official documents recording U.S. dealings with Saddam.

Until recently their efforts to keep the press and Congress at bay had largely succeeded. On the Hill the only serious inquisitor into administration dealings with Iraq has been Texas Democrat Henry B. Gonzalez, the venerable but idiosyncratic chairman of the House Banking Committee. Despite objections and threats from administration officials to cut off his access to official papers, over the last three months Gonzalez has made public dozens of classified documents that disclose the policy's proponents and provide at least an outline of its evolution. Congressional officials say there has been no comparable release of government secrets by a member of Congress since Senator Mike Gravel read the Pentagon Papers into the record. But so far the national media—with the notable exception of Murray Waas and Douglas Frantz of the *Los Angeles Times*—have not bothered to report much on Gonzalez's revelations, perhaps put off by his eccentricity and prolixity. The current cover story in *U.S. News & World Report*, "Iraqgate," may signal a new wave of media attention.

This general lack of interest is all the more surprising given the import of the material. Juxtaposed with still-secret records obtained from other sources and obscure statements and documents released by the administration itself, Gonzalez's revelations could be more devastating to the Reagan and Bush administrations than the Iran-contra affair. The failed Iran-contra policy, which involved relatively modest numbers of

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MARK HOSENBALL is a producer for "Dateline NBC."

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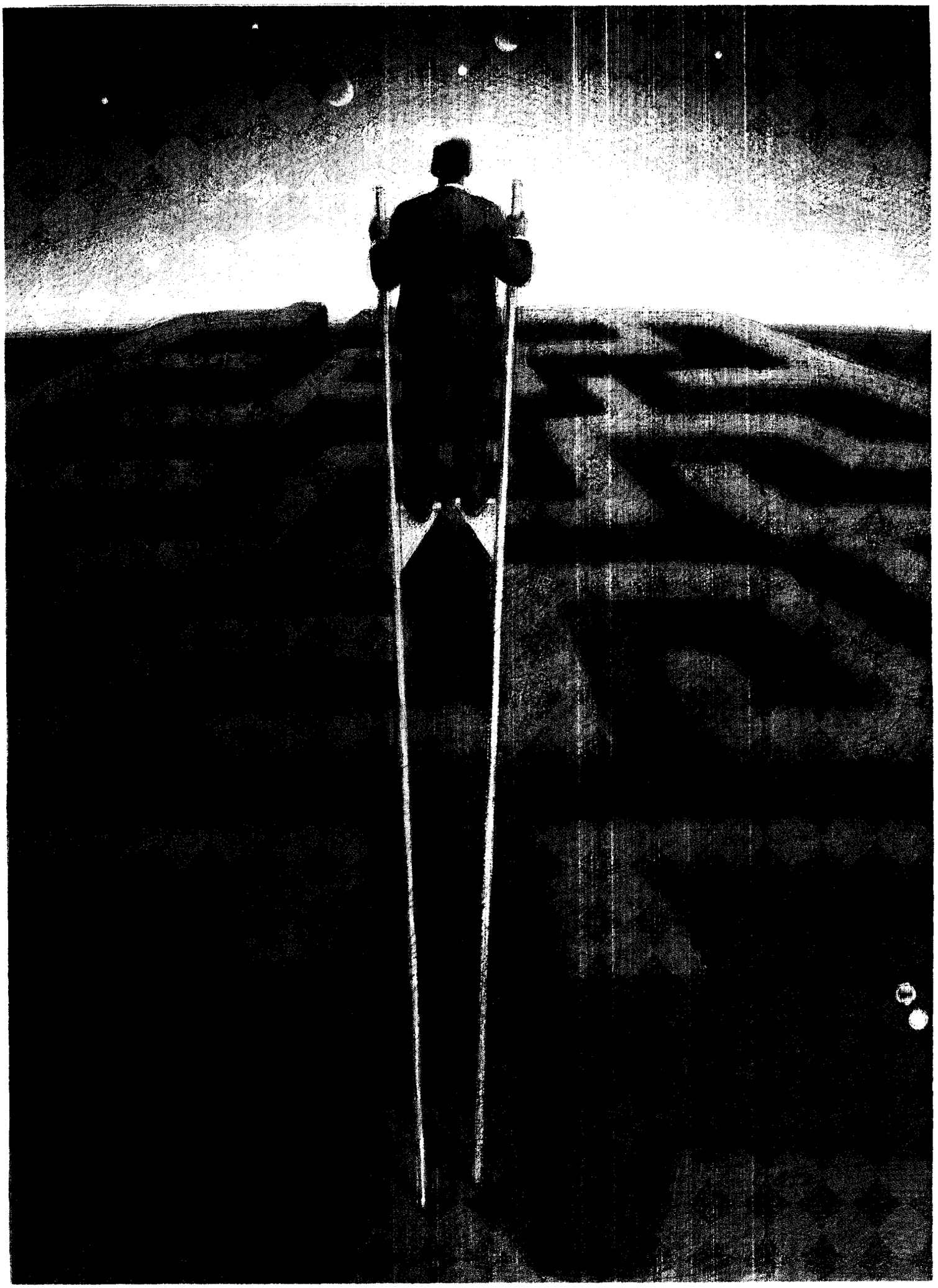

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BOEING

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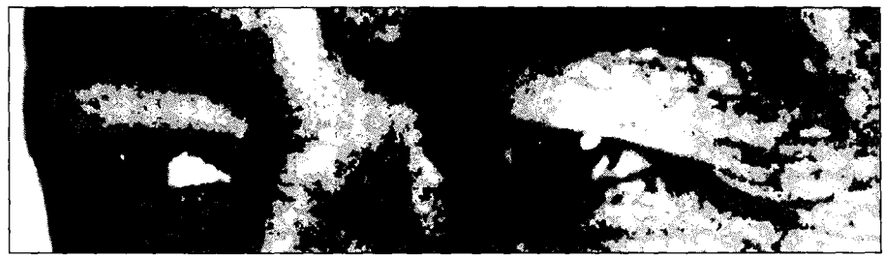
weapons and even smaller amounts of cash, had little ultimate effect on the matters it was intended to influence in Iran, Lebanon, and Nicaragua. By contrast, though there may have been less outright criminality and dirty trickery in U.S. dealings with Saddam, ultimately the secret policy of building up Iraq economically and militarily had a far more disastrous result: the Reagan and Bush administrations helped arm Iraq for a war it fought against the United States.

As originally conceived, the Bush and Reagan policy toward Iraq had some logic. The fall of the Shah left Washington without a proxy in the oil-rich Persian Gulf. The 1980 hostage crisis showed that the Ayatollahs were intent not only on destabilizing the region but on humiliating the "Great Satan" as well. Compared with Khomeini, Saddam, despite his reputation as a power-crazed cutthroat, seemed like the kind of pragmatic dictator a U.S. president could do business with; all Washington initially needed to do was to engineer a moderate tilt toward Baghdad in the interminable Iran-Iraq war. But both Washington and Saddam got carried away. The administrations continued their vast subsidies to Saddam long after the Iran-Iraq conflict faded. Saddam, in turn, may well have concluded that continued American generosity meant he could discreetly proceed with his more grandiose military plans.



From the outset, the U.S. tilt toward Iraq involved some tortuous policy gymnastics. When Ronald Reagan came to office in 1981, U.S. government agencies were blocked from giving financial aid to Iraq because Saddam's regime was on an official list of countries that succored terrorists. But in 1982, with little explanation, the administration removed Iraq from the terrorist list. In confidential cables, American diplomats in Baghdad urged the State Department to improve relations by offering U.S. government financial backing through the Agriculture Department and the Export-Import Bank. In a December 1983 confidential briefing paper, Richard Murphy, the State Department's Middle East expert, said such aid "would go far to show our support for Iraq in a practical, neutral context." The official Reagan administration policy was that the United States was neutral in the Iran-Iraq war.

Within days of Murphy's briefing paper, in a letter classified "secret" and dated Christmas Eve 1983, Under Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger was urging Ex-Im Bank chairman William Draper III to open a line of credit for Iraq: "Recently," he wrote, "the President of Iraq announced the termination of all assistance to the principal terrorist group of concern [probably the infamous Abu Nidal organization, which enjoyed an off-and-on friendship with Iraq over the years], among others. Iraq then expelled its leader. The terrorism issue, therefore, should no longer be an impediment to Ex-Im financing for U.S. sales to Iraq." Eagleburger added that "from the political standpoint, Ex-Im financing ... could provide some incentive for Iraq to comply with our urgings that it show restraint in the war."

The Export-Import Bank was not thrilled by the suggestion. Its credit analysts had concluded that Iraq's economy was in dire straits, and the likelihood that Iraq would repay its debts on time was remote. But pressure from top officials continued and later intensified after the State Department signed on to a grand strategy that it believed could both right Iraq's economy and solve one of America's gravest concerns about Iran. The plan was to build a pipeline for Iraqi crude oil across the Arabian desert to the Jordanian Port of Aqaba. The pipeline, financed with loan guarantees from the Ex-Im Bank, would be built by the American contractor Bechtel (whose former president, George Shultz, happened to be secretary of state). During a February 1984 swing through Baghdad, Murphy reported to Washington in a secret cable that he had discussed the pipeline project with Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz and told him that Washington "certainly recognized that this was a project of strategic importance. Beyond providing sources of revenue for Iraq and Jordan, it was of global importance by reducing collective reliance on the Strait of Hormuz."

The Export-Import Bank continued to balk, but in June 1984 Draper received a call from a former Yale classmate, George Bush. According to confidential "talking points" prepared by the State Department for Bush before he made the call, the vice president was supposed to point out that Iran "was the intransigent party" in the Iran-Iraq war, and, "We must therefore seek means to bolster Iraq's ability and resolve to withstand Iranian attacks." Following this appeal—which Draper told the *L.A. Times* he now does not remember—the bank finally approved a $484 million loan guarantee for the project.

In this matter and in most others, the officials whose comments and advice on U.S. relations with Iraq now look remarkably prescient are the lower-level bureaucrats whom politicians and top policy-makers usually disdain as unimaginative time-servers. From the moment Washington's tilt toward Baghdad began, analysts at the Export-Import Bank resisted administration pressure because, in the words of one dismissive State Department memorandum, the bank did not believe there was a "reasonable assurance of repayment." Time

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and again bureaucrats warned policy-makers that based upon the evidence of his record, Saddam's practice was only to pay off his big international creditors after they had agreed to advance him new—and larger—lines of credit.

In a curious circumlocution, according to his confidential script, Bush also was supposed to tell Draper that the Iraqi pipeline could "contribute to stability in the region by promoting at least tacit cooperation in the region." Other evidence suggests that this was a reference to the Reagan administration's efforts to enlist Israel's support for the plan. The biggest problem was geographical: the pipeline would have to run for at least some distance along Jordan's border with Israel. But that would make it an easy and early target for Israel in the event of a new Arab-Israeli war. The administration's answer, according to a secret cable sent by Shultz in March 1984 to special envoy Donald Rumsfeld, who was touring the Middle East, was for Washington to make known "to the Israelis our interest in the completion of the line." The Israelis, in turn, "raised no objections." But according to the cable, they apparently did not give a "guarantee of ... noninterference" the Iraqis had hoped for. Lacking such a guarantee, the Iraqis were reluctant to go forward.

This led to a more intense round of wheeling and dealing. Secret documents show that the project, and Bechtel's role in it, had support at the highest levels of the U.S. government. But the project still seemed to be going nowhere. Not wanting the deal to fall apart, but apparently fearing that the Iraqis would be put off if the company was seen dealing directly with Israel, Bechtel felt it had to try another approach. So in 1985 the company hired a Swiss-based businessman named Bruce Rappaport who had high-level Israeli friends, including Labor leader Shimon Peres. He was to use these contacts to win an explicit Israeli sanction for the pipeline. Rappaport retained as his American adviser E. Bob Wallach, a close personal friend of Ed Meese, then adviser to the Reagan White House. Meese arranged for Wallach to discuss the pipeline with White House national security adviser Robert McFarlane. And Wallach then tried to parlay this introduction into leverage with a government agency called the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, which he hoped would write a half-billion-dollar, taxpayer-backed insurance policy indemnifying the pipeline's operators against an Israeli attack. In an "eyes only" memo to Meese that later surfaced in the press, Wallach suggested that Israel's cooperation could be cemented by an agreement to offer Israel royalties on oil that was shipped through the pipeline; as added security, some of the royalties could even be funneled to Peres's political treasury. Despite Wallach's imaginative proposals for encouraging Israeli cooperation—or possibly because of them—the pipeline project eventually foundered.

Meanwhile, in July 1984, following pressure by Vice President Bush and others, the Export-Import Bank offered Saddam a $200 million short-term credit line. The credit was cut off a few months later when Iraq slipped behind in its payments, and despite heavy pressure from the State Department to loosen up, the Ex-Im Bank continued to refuse new Iraqi credits. Then, in 1987, two events seemed to change its mind. First, Iraq paid off its overdue Ex-Im bills. Second, Bush made a second phone call to Ex-Im on Saddam's behalf. According to Bush's classified script for the phone call, which again was drawn up by the State Department, Bush told the new Ex-Im chairman, John Bohn, that he was about to meet Washington's Iraqi ambassador and wanted to "be as responsive as possible." There was now little pretense of neutrality in the Iran-Iraq war: "As you know," says Bush's script, "there are major U.S. policy considerations at work in this issue. Iraq has apparently contained the latest Iranian offensive, and we are taking advantage of that to try to put some life into peace efforts.... Now is the time to begin building a solid trade relationship with Iraq for the future." Ex-Im Bank officials reopened a $200 million credit line. Later, when Bush actually met the Iraqi ambassador, he appears to have had additional good news. According to a confidential briefing paper prepared for the vice president before his meeting with the Iraqi, the Defense Department had been blocking export licenses for two high-technology shipments that the Iraqis were desperate to obtain. Bush was advised by the State Department that "from the Iraqi perspective, the long delays appear to be capricious. We agree with that assessment."

According to a little-noticed speech on Iraq policy given on the House floor in February 1992 by Gonzalez, the Iraqis used the Ex-Im guarantees, among other things, to buy armored ambulances, portable communications gear, and pesticides. (In one amazing internal Ex-Im Bank memo, an analyst pointed out that some of the pesticides that Ex-Im credit was helping Iraq to buy had the same deadly effects as nerve gas. But since the pesticides were not on an official U.S. list of nerve gas components, the analyst concluded, Ex-Im could not refuse to finance the transaction.) From its point of view Ex-Im Bank did not suffer too badly when its credit line was finally revoked after Saddam invaded Kuwait: the Iraqis had kept relatively current with their repayments, and the bank faced only $50 million worth of claims on unpaid loans it had guaranteed.

Financing through the Ex-Im Bank was only a small part of Washington's support for Saddam. Much heavier financial support was funneled to Iraq—at the ultimate expense of the U.S. taxpayer—through export credit guarantee programs operated by the Agriculture Department's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). A chronology drawn up by a House Agriculture subcommittee headed by North Carolina Democrat Charlie Rose (based on claims filed by banks with the Agriculture Department after Iraq stopped repaying its loans in the wake of the invasion of

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Kuwait) shows at least $3.37 billion worth of agriculture export loan guarantees were granted to Iraq between 1987 and early 1990 alone. At State Department urging, Agriculture's credit facilities for Iraq had opened in 1983 with sales of $365 million worth of government-guaranteed agricultural products. By 1988 Agriculture commodity export guarantees to Iraq were totaling more than $1 billion annually.

One bank that received a large share of the Agriculture export guarantees for Iraq was the Atlanta branch of the largest state-controlled bank in Italy, the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro (BNL), which has become the focus of almost as much international scandal and intrigue as the notorious bank of crooks and criminals, BCCI. By Gonzalez's estimate, the Atlanta bank branch of BNL received $900 million in Agriculture Department loan guarantees—which later turned out to be only a quarter of the Atlanta bank's total loans to Iraq. On August 4, 1989, a team of agents from the FBI and the Federal Reserve Board, acting on a tip that Saddam might have diverted some American-backed loans for sinister purposes, raided the Atlanta bank branch and seized its records. Within weeks frantic memoranda were circulating in government agencies that had been aware of the bank's role in U.S. credit programs to Iraq, expressing concern about Saddam's misuse of the money. In the words of one internal Agriculture Department memorandum, "It appears more and more likely that [Agriculture Department] funds ... may have been diverted from Iraq to third parties in exchange for military hardware.... Noted in particular ... were a 'nuclear fuel compounder' and a nose cone burr." Congressional investigators are now putting together hard evidence to support their long-standing indications about the diversion scheme. There are strong indications that U.S.-backed loans played a significant role in helping Saddam build up his nuclear and missile development programs.

One major recipient of loan money from BNL was a British machine tool company called Matrix-Churchill. This company was actually controlled by agents of Iraq's Ministry of Industry and Military Industrialization, which was in charge of Saddam's worldwide military purchasing network. Matrix Churchill's office in Cleveland, Ohio, was shut down and raided by Treasury agents shortly after Iraq invaded Kuwait, and documents seized showed the company had been buying equipment from a wide assortment of American high-technology manufacturers, who signed papers agreeing to kick back 5 percent to 10 percent of the value of their contracts to Matrix and its principals back in Baghdad.

The raid on the Atlanta branch of BNL caused considerable worry among bureaucrats in Washington, who were just deciding to go ahead with massive additional aid programs for Iraq for fiscal year 1990. Serious muscle was applied at the highest level to get past concerns over the Iraqi aid. First, in a document that the administration has refused to declassify, known as National Security Decision Directive 26, President Bush himself ordered that efforts to improve relations with Iraq were to continue as part of U.S. strategy to protect its interests in the Persian Gulf, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. When investigators for Representative John Dingell, chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee, asked the White House to see the directive in connection with their own investigation of bungled intelligence warnings about Iraq's nuclear research (see "Blind Eye," TNR, November 25, 1991), national security adviser Brent Scowcroft wrote a haughty letter to Dingell to say that only members of Congress and staff directors would be allowed to see it. (Later the White House did allow other Dingell staffers to see the document.)

Following the presidential directive, Baker bent over backward to reassure the Iraqis of continued American support. When Iraqi Foreign Minister Aziz paid a friendly visit to Washington a few days later, Baker eagerly accepted assurances from Aziz that the Iraqi government was not involved in the BNL affair. According to the official notes of the meeting, which were memorialized in a secret cable sent to the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad: "The secretary asked if GOI [Government of Iraq] is cooperating with the Fed investigation.... Aziz said that Iraqi central bank governor and the minister of finance had been in Washington, met with U.S. officials, and were told the GOI was not involved.... He stressed Iraqi pride in rooting out corruption and said GOI would surely act on any information available to it."

Apparently that was all the reassurance that Baker needed. The Agriculture Department, reacting to the Atlanta bank raid, had tentatively decided to cancel a billion-dollar loan guarantee package planned for Iraq in fiscal year 1990 and to propose instead only an "interim" package for $400 million. The State Department, however, wanted Agriculture to agree to the original billion, and Baker called Clayton Yeutter, then secretary of agriculture. According to the classified script prepared for Baker by his staff, he was to tell Yeutter that the full loan program should be supported on "foreign policy grounds." "The Iraqi foreign minister," Baker's talking point said, "with whom I talked, has now pledged Iraq's cooperation.... With safeguards, I hope we can get this important program on track quickly." A handwritten note at the bottom of the memo, signed with the initials J.A.B. III, says, "Done. C.Y.: I think we're seeing it the same way your guys are. I'll get right into it." Deputy Secretary Eagleburger subsequently phoned his counterpart at the Treasury Department to soothe concerns there. Agriculture went forward with the full billion dollars in loan guarantees, though it did build in the minor "safeguard" of providing the credit in two half-billion-dollar installments.

Within months Iraq had used up the first $500 million in credits, and the State Department and White House again pressured the Agriculture Department to pony up the other half. But as press interest in the

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police raid on BNL intensified, the Agriculture Department was becoming more nervous. Then, in late March 1990, British authorities broke up an Iraqi military acquisition network that had been trying to buy nuclear trigger parts from a company in California. And shortly afterward Saddam made his notorious threat to "burn half of Israel" to the ground. A secret "options paper" on Iraq prepared by the State Department for circulation to NSC members listed both the pros and the cons of not going ahead with more Agricultural credits for Baghdad. A suspension of credits would send a strong statement to Baghdad, the paper noted. But the con argument seemed couched in stronger terms: not going ahead with more credit "would violate our policy against using food as a political weapon and hit some U.S. agricultural supporters hard. It might also lead Iraq to default on CCC-insured loans." In the event, the Agriculture Department did not formally cut off credit to Iraq until Saddam invaded Kuwait a few weeks later.

Meanwhile, early on, the federal prosecutors responsible for dealing with the BNL case decided they had some kind of major scandal on their hands, since documents seized in the raid showed that its employees had been keeping multiple sets of books. According to *New York Times* reporter Dean Baquet, some prosecutors felt indictments should be brought as early as October 1989. But that happened to be the same time Baker was graciously accepting Iraqi assertions of noninvolvement in the bank's documents, and the indictments never were brought. According to one document, in January 1990 the prosecutor in charge of the BNL investigation wrote the Fed that an indictment was "anticipated ... early next month." But that deadline too came and went. No indictments were brought in the bank scandal for more than a year, until just after Bush had declared a cease-fire in Operation Desert Storm.

At the very least, export credits from the U.S. Agriculture Department helped Saddam free up currency reserves for such acquisitions as American computer technology for his missile control rooms and German centrifuges for his uranium enrichment plants. He could use the Export-Import Bank loan guarantees more directly for his military buildup, though he had to buy only "non-lethal" items like armored ambulances. And by 1984 what had started as a modest U.S. tilt toward Iraq had become a dizzying list. In a secret cable to Middle East envoy Rumsfeld from the State Department's Murphy, Secretary of State Shultz had decided to impose new export controls on Iran, but at the same time was considering "revising present policy to permit virtually all sales of non munitions-list dual-use equipment to Iraq."

In the same cable Murphy informed Rumsfeld of an ingenious idea proposed by the Egyptians: "In the context of improving our relations with Iraq, Egypt has suggested that we provide it additional M-60 tanks beyond those we are now providing.... Egypt would use the additional M-60s to replace used Soviet T-62s, which it would sell to Iraq." Murphy did not reject the idea out of hand, though one knowledgeable source says that this particular deal never went through. Two years later, according to another memo disclosed by the *L.A. Times*, the Saudis diverted American-made 2,000-pound bombs to Iraq. The State Department now has insisted privately to Congress that those shipments were "inadvertent."

However, other American support for the Iraqi military was hardly inadvertent. For years the CIA had been supplying Iraq with American intelligence secrets on Iranian military intelligence, a fact confirmed during Senate investigations of Robert Gates for his appointment as CIA director. According to a chronology drawn up by Gonzalez, this policy was ratified by President Reagan in a secret national security directive signed in 1984, about the same time the Egyptians were proposing their tank-swapping plan. The intelligence-sharing authority was expanded twice in 1986 and included giving Iraq information about the success or failure of its military operations.

Few if any secret documents directly from CIA or defense intelligence records of the intelligence exchange have yet been made public, though hints of how high-level American officials hoped intelligence information could be used are offered in a secret July 1986 cable that the State Department's Murphy sent to the American ambassador in Baghdad. "We have encouraged the Vice President to suggest to both King Hussein and President Mubarak that they sustain their efforts to convey our shared views to Saddam regarding Iraq's use of its air resources. The very recent report ... from Amman on the subject leads us to conclude that Saddam may not be open to suggestion. On the other hand, if Saddam does what he says he would do with the Air Force that would be a major plus." A source with firsthand knowledge said that the cable was drafted at a time when Bush was preparing to tour the Middle East and would meet with Hussein and Mubarak. At the time, Saddam was under severe pressure from Iranian ground assaults, and Bush, at the urging of the State Department and America's Arab allies, wanted to encourage Saddam to use his air force more effectively.

U.S. intelligence-sharing with Baghdad lost much of its justification when the Iran-Iraq war ended, and the Reagan administration gave the impression that in 1988 it actually stopped. However, a secret NSC options paper circulated in May 1990 reported that while "intelligence exchanges have waned since the Gulf war cease-fire ... they still provide Iraq with limited information on Iranian military activity."

It is unclear precisely how far the Reagan and Bush administrations went in encouraging American companies to supply Iraq directly with potentially lethal military equipment. Commerce Department export control records show that American companies did export

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to the Iraqi military procurement ministry and to Iraqi "establishments" now known to have been involved in nuclear or missile research. But export license records refer mainly to equipment in the "dual-use" rather than lethal weapon categories (dual-use equipment includes both high-tech and low-tech equipment that can be used for either civilian or military purposes). Documents obtained by congressional investigators show that American companies supplied the British-based Iraqi front company Matrix-Churchill with tooling systems that the American suppliers knew were being sent to Iraq for use in the manufacture of artillery ammunition. State Department officials responsible for licensing the export of American-made munitions manufacturing equipment said no U.S. companies were granted licenses to ship such equipment to Iraq in the 1980s, given official American neutrality in the Iran-Iraq war. Yet at least one American supplier heavily involved in such trade recently insisted to the program "Dateline NBC" that its dealings with Matrix-Churchill had been thoroughly investigated by U.S. authorities earlier this year and declared proper.

Some military suppliers who may have thought they had Washington's tacit approval to peddle their wares to Saddam have already felt the heat of a U.S. crackdown as the Bush administration hunts for ways to show that its Iraq policy was not totally wrongheaded. Last year officers of a Pennsylvania weapons-design firm called International Signal and Control were indicted in connection with a scheme that involved the illegal export of American artillery technology to Iraq via Chile and South Africa. One of the company's Chilean contacts was a major arms manufacturer called Carlos Cardoen, whose company shipped large amounts of artillery and ammunition to Iraq—most notably the anti-personnel shells known as cluster bombs—and also set up munitions factories in Iraq itself. The Treasury Department recently moved to seize Cardoen's extensive holdings in the United States, and he is now facing a criminal investigation. But he was not always such a pariah. A one-time fund-raiser for Florida Senator Bob Graham, whose mansion in Miami he purchased, Cardoen also once employed as his Washington representative a former U.S. ambassador to Chile who also was a consultant to the CIA. No improprieties were found when this arrangement was investigated by the Senate during Gates's confirmation process, but it is possible to see how Cardoen might have come to believe that his dealings with Iraq had at least a quiet blessing from Washington.

Until a few congressional hotheads and media outlets started paying attention, the Bush administration had mounted an aggressive campaign to control the spin on investigations and disclosures about its pre-Desert Storm dealings with Iraq. Within weeks of the end of U.S. military operations in the Gulf, the NSC's legal adviser, Nicholas Rostow, had convened a committee of officials from the various agencies involved in pre-war Iraq policy to discuss how to respond to potential congressional inquiries. According to the Agriculture Department minutes of one Rostow group meeting last April, attended by White House chief counsel C. Boyden Gray, among the tactics the committee discussed for stalling investigators were: prohibiting them from taking notes on or copying secret documents, shuffling papers among agencies, and combing documents for secrets covered by national security or diplomatic privileges.

Meanwhile, the Commerce Department Inspector General found evidence that potentially embarrassing export licensing records related to Iraq may have been doctored. According to a report the Inspector General provided to a House Government Operations subcommittee headed by Georgia Democrat Doug Barnard, at least sixty-eight export license records related to Iraq were altered. On five license records, for example, descriptions of trucks "were changed ... to eliminate a reference to a design for military use"; references to military applications on other licenses were also deleted by the Commerce Department employees. The Inspector General concluded that the alteration of the truck license records in particular was "unjustified." Culprits were not, however, identified by name, and despite demands by Barnard for a criminal investigation, indictments do not appear to be imminent. Meanwhile, in mid-March Gonzalez released a catalog of administration lies to Congress that had been exposed by the disclosure of the government's secret Iraq archive. According to Gonzalez, the most frequent lie was the claim, by both State and Agriculture Department officials, that foreign policy considerations never influenced agricultural export credit programs.

Although the evidence of Washington's foolishness toward Saddam is manifest, it is still fragmentary. Few, if any, government documents have yet been made public bearing security classifications higher than "secret." In the Texas idiom favored by Bush and Baker, this means it is only the mildly hot stuff. The kind of embarrassing detail that might still be hidden in the foreign policy and intelligence archives—stuff classified "top secret" and with even more arcane security code names like RUFF and ZARF—is only hinted at in the material available to date. But even the rough outline now available makes you wonder how Bush, and Reagan before him, could have pursued such a misguided policy, and stuck with it long after the danger signals had rocketed off the charts. President Bush points to his conduct of Operation Desert Storm as proof of his mastery of international affairs, yet his files demonstrate how he helped to create his own nemesis. For nearly a decade Saddam Hussein played George Bush and his inner circle for suckers, and he rules Iraq today after a war that cost the United States $7.4 billion. The seeming failure to learn from, or even properly debate, the evidence of failed U.S. policy in Iraq hardly bodes well for the future. The latest word, according to former administration officials, is that Bush hopes to convince the World Bank to offer a major financial aid package to Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

United State

Sheerly by coincidence, I had dinner in New York with an East Berlin publisher on the day in November 1989 when the Wall fell. He had been traveling in the United States all that month while East Germany was in paroxysm. The prospect of freedom was something more than pleasant for him, but he also had concerns. What was life going to be like, he wondered, for most East Germans? Constricted though they had been in a police state, they had always known where their beings were centered, had known (at least supposedly) the ideals their society was moving toward. However poorly they had been paid or grubbily they had lived, he said, these were people who had never had to look for a job in a job market or scrounge for an apartment. He was both eager and apprehensive about going home.

He made me think of a conversation that I'd had in 1967 in Hamburg with one of the most impressive men I've ever met, Carl-Friedrich von Weizsäcker (brother of the present president of Germany), a former physicist who had given up physics after World War II for philosophy. He could not have been less of a Communist, so I was taken aback when he said that occasionally he had to travel to East Germany, and it was chiefly there that he found traces of the idealistic self-discipline that he remembered from the Germany of his youth, long before Hitler.

These paradoxes, and other matters, are explored in **November Days**, a documentary that Marcel Ophuls made for BBC-TV. Ophuls is best known, of course, for *The Sorrow and the Pity*, but he has also made distinguished documentaries on the Irish troubles (*A Sense of Loss*), the Nuremberg trials (*The Memory of Justice*), and Klaus Barbie (*Hotel Terminus*). Not incidentally—for me, at any rate—he is also distinguished by the very generous review he wrote of Lanzmann's *Shoah*, which was in a sense a "competitive" film for him.

Ophuls moved back and forth between East and West Germany in November 1989, interviewing figures high and less high and many who are not figures at all, braiding the interviews skillfully to emphasize points and to keep the film itself springy. He himself does all the questioning—born German, he is easy in the language—so his voice is a connecting motif. Often he is on screen in these interviews and creates for himself a sort of character, a smiling Robespierre.

Some of his editing devices are a bit heavy. He intercuts clips of Hollywood films to italicize points: for instance, at a particular political moment, he gives us Louis Calhern as Caesar uttering, "Et tu, Brute," after James Mason as Brutus deals the final blow. For wryness, toward the end, he overlays Bing Crosby's voice singing a dopey song about freedom. And some of his guests overstay their welcome. The back-and-forth, tennis-match interviews with two former Communist bigwigs peter out before they finish.

But most of the material is gripping. Even if we know the overall data, film presences deepen them. Some of the subjects: Markus Wolf, the elegant retired general of the Stasi, courteously denies that he knew anything about Stasi tortures and killings—they were not his department. The Communist poet and short-story writer Stephan Hermlin purrs over his pipe with an equanimity that presumably Party fidelity bought for him and that is unshaken. On the other hand, Bärbel Bohley, dubbed "the mother of the revolution," radiates an air of quiet loss that has human authenticity even for those who disagree.

Brecht's daughter, Barbara Brecht-Schall, married to Ekkehard Schall, a leading actor of the Berliner Ensemble, answers Ophuls's questions in flawless Californian English, which is startling until we remember that she spent seven years of her early life in Los Angeles. (With Brecht-Schall, as with some others, Ophuls shows her to be fibbing by intercutting contradictory film. She denies that she knew Honecker outside of a few official formalities: Ophuls then shows her sitting next to Honecker in a theater chatting with him.) Michael Kühnen, the neo-Nazi leader in West Germany, whom we glimpse at one of his rallies, converses calmly with Ophuls about his beliefs, contending that Jews cannot really be German or French or anything else, that they all have divided loyalties. When Ophuls reminds Kühnen that he is being interviewed by a Jew and asks sarcastically whether Kühnen regards his friendliness as slimy, Kühnen waves away such a possibility with a generous gesture.

Two of the interviews loom above the others. (Reminder: no interview is shown *en bloc*. All are interwoven.) The

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Casablanca. *On its fiftieth birthday—the reason it is reissued—it holds up pretty well, Bogart (and the dialogue written for him) especially. (Reviewed 5/4/92)* **Howards End.** *Vanessa Redgrave, Emma Thompson, and Anthony Hopkins are only three of the reasons for seeing this beautiful version of Forster's great novel. (3/23/92)* **JFK.** *Essential viewing. More a historical fantasy than history, its very effect has a certain buried truth. (1/27/92)* **Raspad.** *A Kiev director's re-creation of the Chernobyl disaster. Most of the fictional stories woven around it are thin, but the core is chillingly powerful. (5/18/92)* **—SK**

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first is with Heiner Müller, the playwright so widely celebrated throughout Europe. Müller casts himself as a nihilist, a *provocateur*. He answers Ophuls's questions with Brechtian, cigar-smoking, slow, ironic glee. When Ophuls brings up the subject of living in a dictatorship, Müller replies pleasantly that he was born in a dictatorship and knows how to deal with one. "Democracy," he says, "bores me." Brecht might himself have been startled.

Then there is the interview with Kurt Masur in his Leipzig concert hall. Ophuls seems almost to be trying to trap Masur with some political questions. Masur, oddly choosing to speak English though he is not fluent, flushes and puts Ophuls in his place. Then Masur speaks of the matters that had bothered the East Berlin publisher. What will happen to the spirit of people who have been brought up from birth under certain codes and are deprived of them? It is not the worrying of a warped slave but of an empathic human being. The best that can be said of Ophuls in this encounter is that he had the courage to leave it in the film.

November Days doesn't rank with the top Ophuls films, but it's very valuable. It gets its American premiere as part of an Ophuls retrospective that is itself part of a film festival presented by Human Rights Watch and principally sponsored by Loews Theaters. This festival, comprising twenty-five features and twenty-seven shorts from numerous countries, is opening in New York and then will travel to Los Angeles, Boston, Minneapolis, Berkeley, Chicago, Cincinnati, Houston, and Baltimore. If your locality isn't in this list, please be angry with your local theater managers.

This festival has a value other than its thematic focus. It is giving American premieres to several films besides *November Days* that might not otherwise be available here in these money-straitened times. •

What James Baldwin can and can't teach America.

The Fire Last Time

BY HENRY LOUIS GATES JR.

"I am *not* in paradise," James Baldwin assured readers of the *Black Scholar* in 1973. "It rains down here too." Maybe it did. But it seemed like paradise to me. In 1973 I was 22 years old, an eager young black American journalist doing a story for *Time*, visiting Baldwin at his home just outside the tiny, ancient walled village of St. Paul de Vence, nestled in the alpine foothills that rise from the Mediterranean Sea. The air carried the smells of wild thyme and pine and centuries-old olive trees. The light of the region, prized by painters and vacationers, at once intensifies and subdues the colors, so that the terra-cotta tile roofs of the buildings are by turns rosy pink, rust brown, or deep red.

Baldwin's house was situated among shoulder-high rosemary hedges, grape arbors, acres of peach and almond orchards, and fields of wild asparagus and strawberries; it had been built in the eighteenth century and retained its frescoed walls and rough-hewn beams. And yet he seemed to have made of it his own Greenwich Village café. Always there were guests, an entourage of friends and hangers-on, and always there was drinking and conviviality. The grape arbors sheltered tables, and it was under one such grape arbor, at one of the long harvest tables, that we dined. The line from the old gospel song, a line that Baldwin had quoted toward the end of his then latest novel, suggested itself: "I'm going to feast at the welcome table." And we did—Baldwin, and Josephine Baker, well into her 60s but still with a lean dancer's body and the smooth skin that the French called "café-au-lait," and Cecil Brown, author of *The Life and Loves of Mister Jiveass Nigger* and one of the great hopes of black fiction, my fiancée, Sharon Adams, and I.

At that long welcome table under the arbor, the wine flowed, food was served and taken away, and Baldwin and Baker traded stories, gossiped about everyone they knew and many people they didn't know, and remembered their lives. They had both been hurt and disillusioned by the United States and had chosen to live in France. They never forgot or forgave. At the table that long, warm night they recollected the events that led to their

HENRY LOUIS GATES JR. is the author most recently of *Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars* (Oxford University Press).

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decisions to leave their country of birth, and the consequences of those decisions: the difficulty of living away from home and family, of always feeling apart in their chosen homes; the pleasure of choosing a new life, the possibilities of the untried. A sense of nostalgia pervaded the evening. For all their misgivings, they shared a sense, curiously, of being on the winning side of history.

People said Baldwin was ugly; he himself said so. But he was not ugly to me. There are faces that we cannot see simply as faces because they are so familiar, so iconic, and his face was one of them. And as I sat there, in a growing haze of awe and alcohol, studying his lined visage, I realized that neither the Baldwin I was meeting—mischievous, alert, funny—nor the Baldwin I might come to know could ever mean as much to me as James Baldwin, my own personal oracle, the gimlet-eyed figure who stared at me out of a fuzzy dust jacket photograph when I was 14. For that was when I first met Baldwin, and discovered that black people, too, wrote books.

It was the summer of 1965, and I was attending an Episcopal church camp in eastern West Virginia, high in the Allegheny Mountains. This was no ordinary church camp. Our themes that year were "Is God dead?" and "Can you love two people at once?" (Episcopalians were never ones to let grass grow under their feet.) After a solid week of complete isolation, a delivery man, bringing milk and bread to the camp, told the head counselor that "all hell had broken loose in Los Angeles," and that the "colored people had gone crazy." Then he handed him a Sunday paper, screaming the news that Negroes were rioting in some place called Watts. I, for one, was bewildered. I didn't understand what a riot was. Were colored people being killed by white people, or were they killing white people? Watching myself being watched by all of the white campers—there were only three black kids among the hundreds of campers—I experienced that strange combination of power and powerlessness that you feel when the actions of another black person affect your own life, simply because both of you are black.

Sensing my mixture of pride and discomfiture, an Episcopal priest from New England handed me a book. *Notes of a Native Son*, it was called. Was this man the author, I wondered to myself, this man with a closely cropped "natural," brown skin, splayed nostrils, and wide lips, so very Negro, so comfortable to be so? This was the first time I had heard a voice capturing the terrible exhilaration and anxiety of being a person of African descent in this country. From the book's first few sentences, I was caught up thoroughly in the sensibility of another person, a black person. Coming from a tiny and segregated black community in a white village, I knew that "black culture" had a texture, a logic, of its own, *and* that it was inextricable from "white" culture. That was the paradox that Baldwin identified and negotiated, and that is why I say his prose shaped my identity as an Afro-American, as much by the questions he raised as by the answers he provided.

I could not put the book down. I raced through it, then others, filling my commonplace book with his marvelously long sentences that bristled with commas and qualifications. The biblical cadences spoke to me with a special immediacy, for I, too, was to be a minister, having been "saved" in a small evangelical church at the age of 12. (From this fate the Episcopalians—and also Baldwin—diverted me.) Eventually I began to imitate Baldwin's style of writing, using dependent clauses whenever and wherever I could. Consider a passage from *Nobody Knows My Name*:

> And a really cohesive society, one of the attributes, perhaps, of what is taken to be a "healthy" culture, has, generally, and I suspect, necessarily, a much lower level of tolerance for the maverick, the dissenter, the man who steals the fire, than have societies in which, the *common ground of belief* having all but vanished, each man, in awful and brutal isolation, is for himself, to flower or to perish.

There are sixteen commas in that sentence. And so in my essays at school I was busy trying to cram as many commas into my sentences as I could, until my high school English teacher forbade me.

Of course, I was not alone in my enthrallment. When Baldwin wrote *The Fire Next Time* in 1963, he was exalted as *the* voice of black America; and it was not long before he was spoken of as a contender for the Nobel Prize. ("Opportunity and duty are sometimes born together," he wrote later.) Perhaps not since Booker T. Washington had one man been taken to embody the voice of "the Negro." By the early '60s his authority seemed nearly unchallengeable. What did the Negro want? Ask James Baldwin.

JAMES BALDWIN BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The puzzle was that his arguments, richly nuanced and self-consciously ambivalent, were far too complex to serve straightforwardly political ends. Thus he would argue in *Notes of a Native Son* that

> the question of color, especially in this country, operates to hide the graver question of the self. That is precisely why what we like to call "the Negro problem" is so tenacious in American life, and so dangerous. But my own experience proves to me that the connection between American whites and blacks is far deeper and more passionate than any of us like to think.... The questions which one asks oneself begin, at last, to illuminate the world, and become one's key to the experience of others. One can only face in others what one

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can face in oneself. On this confrontation depends the measure of our wisdom and compassion. This energy is all that one finds in the rubble of vanished civilizations, and the only hope for ours.

One does not read such a passage without a double take. By proclaiming that the color question conceals the graver questions of the self, Baldwin leads you to expect a transcendence of the contingencies of race, in the name of a deeper artistic or psychological truth. But instead, with an abrupt swerve, he returns you precisely to those questions:

> In America, the color of my skin had stood between myself and me; in Europe, that barrier was down. Nothing is more desirable than to be released from an affliction, but nothing is more frightening than to be divested of a crutch. It turned out that the question of who I was was not solved because I had removed myself from the social forces which menaced me—anyway, these forces had become interior, and I had dragged them across the ocean with me. The question of who I was had at last become a personal question, and the answer was to be found in me.
>
> I think there is always something frightening about this realization. I know it frightened me.

Again, these words are easily misread. For Baldwin was proposing not that politics is merely a projection of private neuroses, but that our private neuroses are shaped by quite public ones. The retreat to subjectivity, the "graver questions of the self," would lead not to an escape from the "racial drama," but—and this was the alarming prospect that Baldwin wanted to announce—a rediscovery of it.

That traditional liberal dream of a non-racial self, unconstrained by epidermal contingencies, was hopefully entertained and at last, for him, reluctantly dismissed. "There are," he observed,

> few things on earth more attractive than the idea of the unspeakable liberty which is allowed the unredeemed. When, beneath the black mask, a human being begins to make himself felt one cannot escape a certain awful wonder as to what kind of human being it is. What one's imagination makes of other people is dictated, of course, by the laws of one's own personality and it is one of the ironies of black-white relations that, by means of what the white man imagines the black man to be, the black man is enabled to know who the white man is.

This is not a call for "racial understanding." On the contrary, we understand each other all too well, for we have invented one another, derived our identities from the ghostly projections of our alter egos. If Baldwin had a central political argument, it was that the destinies of black America and white were profoundly and irreversibly intertwined. Each created the other, each defined itself in relation to the other, each could destroy the other.

For Baldwin, America's "interracial drama" had "not only created a new black man, it has created a new white man, too." In that sense, he could argue, "The history of the American Negro problem is not merely shameful, it is also something of an achievement. For even when the worst has been said, it must also be added that the perpetual challenge posed by this problem was always, somehow, perpetually met." These were not words to speed along a cause. They certainly did not mesh with the rhetoric of self-affirmation that liberation movements, including those masquerading as a newly "Afrocentric" science of man, require. Yet couldn't his sense of the vagaries of identity serve the ends of a still broader, braver politics?

As an intellectual, Baldwin was at his best when he explored his own equivocal sympathies and clashing allegiances. He was here to "bear witness," he insisted, not to be a spokesman. And he was right to insist on the distinction. But who had time for such niceties? The spokesman role was assigned him inevitably. The result was to complicate further his curious position as an Afro-American intellectual. In those days, on the populist left, the favored model of the oppositional spokesman was what Gramsci called the "organic intellectual," who participated in, and was part of, the community, which he would not only analyze but also uplift. And yet Baldwin's basic conception of himself was formed by the older but still well-entrenched ideal of the alienated artist or intellectual, whose advanced sensibility entailed his estrangement from the very people he would represent.

Baldwin could dramatize the tension between these two models, especially in his fiction, but he was never to resolve it. A spokesman must have a firm grasp on his role and an unambiguous message to articulate. Baldwin had neither, and when this was discovered a few short years later, he was relieved of his duties, summarily retired, shunted aside as an elder statesman. Indeed, by the time I met him, on that magical afternoon in St. Paul de Vence, he had become (as my own editor subsequently admonished me) passé. Anyone who was aware of the ferment in black America was familiar with the attacks. And nothing ages a young Turk faster than still younger Turks; the cruel irony was that Baldwin may never have fully recovered from this demotion from a status that he had always disavowed.

If Baldwin had once served as a shadow delegate for black America in the congress of culture, his term had expired. Soldiers, not delegates, were what was wanted these days. "Pulling rank," Eldridge Cleaver wrote in his essay on Baldwin, "is a very dangerous business, especially when the troops have mutinied and the basis of one's authority, or rank, is devoid of that interdictive power and has become suspect." He found in Baldwin's work "the most grueling, agonizing, total hatred of the blacks, particularly of himself, and the most shameful, fanatical, fawning, sycophantic love of the whites that one can find in any black American writer of note in our time." According to Amiri Baraka, the new star of the Black Arts Movement, Baldwin was "Joan of Arc of the cocktail party." His "spavined whine and plea" was "sickening beyond belief." In the eyes of the young Ishmael Reed, he was "a hustler who comes on like Job."

Cleaver attacked Baldwin on more than racial grounds. For the heated new apostle of black machismo, Baldwin's sexuality, that is, his homosexuality, also represented treason: "Many Negro homosexuals, acquiescing in this racial deathwish, are outraged because in their sickness they are unable to have a baby by a white man." Baldwin was thus engaged in "a despicable underground guerrilla war, waged on paper, against black masculinity." Young militants referred to Baldwin, unsmilingly, as Martin Luther Queen. Baldwin, of course, was hardly a stranger to the sexual battlefield. "On every street corner," Baldwin would later recall of his early days in the Village, "I was called a faggot." What was different this time was a newly sexualized black nationalism that could stigmatize homosexuality as a capitulation to alien white norms, and in that way accredit homophobia as a progressive political act.

A new generation, so it seemed, was determined to define itself by everything Baldwin was not. By the late '60s Baldwin-bashing was almost a rite of initiation. And yet Baldwin would not return fire, at least not in public. He responded with a pose of wounded passivity. And then, with a kind of capitulation: the shift of political climate forced him to simplify his rhetoric or risk internal exile.

As his old admirers recognized, Baldwin was now chasing, with unseemly alacrity, after a new vanguard, one that esteemed rage, not compassion, as our noblest emotion. "It is not necessary for a black man to hate a white man, or to have particular feelings about him at all, in order to realize that he must kill him," he wrote in *No Name in the Street*, a book he began in 1967 but did not publish until 1972. "Yes, we have come, or are coming, to this, and there is no point in flinching

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before the prospect of this exceedingly cool species of fratricide." That same year he told *The New York Times* of his belated realization that "our destinies are in our hands, black hands, and no one else's."

It is a stirring sentiment—and a sentiment that the earlier Baldwin would have been the first to see through. How far he had come from the author of *The Fire Next Time*, who had forecast the rise of black power and yet was certain that

> w[e] the black and the white, deeply need each other here if we are really to become a n[a]tion—if we are really, that is, to achieve our identity, our maturity, as men and women. To create one nation has proved to be a hideously difficult task: there is certainly no need now to create two, one black, and one white.

All such qualms were irrelevant now. In an offhanded but calculated manner, Baldwin affected to dismiss his earlier positions: "I was, in some way, in those years, without entirely realizing it, the Great Black Hope of the Great White Father." If there was something ominous about this public display of self-criticism, it was because we could not forget that the forced recantation has no value that does not purport to be freely given.

In an impossible gambit, the author of *No Name in the Street* sought to reclaim his lost authority by signaling his willingness to be instructed by those who had inherited it. Contradicting his own greatest achievements, he feebly borrowed the populist slogans of the day, and returned them with the beautiful Baldwinian polish. "The powerless, by definition, can never be 'racists,'" he writes, "for they can never make the world pay for what they feel or fear except by the suicidal endeavor that makes them fanatics or revolutionaries, or both; whereas those in power can be urbane and charming and invite you to those houses which they know you will never own." This view—that blacks cannot be racist—is today a familiar one, a platitude of much of the contemporary debate. The key phrase, of course, is "by definition." For this is not only, or even largely, an empirical claim. It is a rhetorical and psychological move, an unfortunate but unsurprising attempt by the victim to forever exempt himself from guilt.

The term "racism" is here redefined by Baldwin, as it has been redefined by certain prominent Afro-American artists and intellectuals today, to refer to a reified system of power relations, to a social order in which one race is essentially and forever subordinated to another. (A parallel move is common in much feminist theory, where "patriarchy"—naming a social order to which Man and Woman have a fixed and opposed relation—contrasts with "sexism," which characterizes the particular acts of particular people.) To be sure, it does express, in an abstract and extreme manner, a widely accepted truth: that the asymmetries of power mean that not all racial insult is equal. (Not even a Florida jury is much concerned when a black captive calls his arresting officer a "cracker.") Still, it represents a grave political error.

For black America needs allies more than it needs absolution. And the slogan—a definition masquerading as an idea—would all too quickly serve as a blanket amnesty for our own dankest suspicions and bigotries. It is a slogan that Baldwin once would have debunked with his devastating mock-detachment. He would have repudiated it not for the sake of white America—for white America, he would have argued, the display of black prejudice could only provide a reassuring confirmation of its own—but for the sake of black America. The Baldwin who knew that the fates of black and white America were one also knew that if racism was to be deplored, it was to be deplored *tout court*, without exemption clauses for the oppressed.

Wasn't it this conviction, above all, that explained Baldwin's own repudiation of Malcolm X? I should be clear. His reverence for Malcolm was real, but it was posthumous. In a conversation with Kenneth Clark recorded in 1963, a year and a half before Malcolm's assassination, Baldwin ventured that by preaching black supremacy, "what [Malcolm] does

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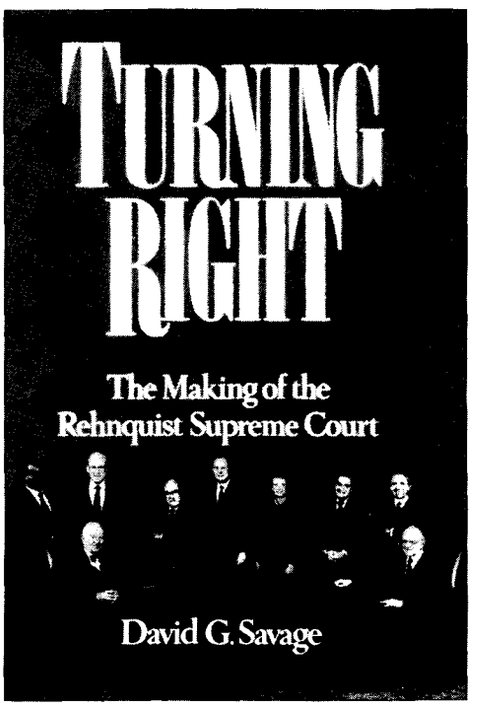

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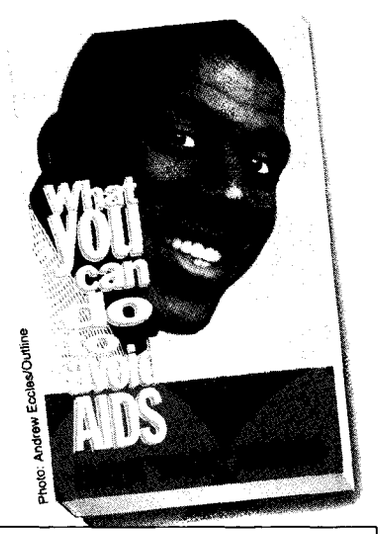
is destroy a truth and invent a myth." Compared with King's appeal, he said, Malcolm's appeal was

> much more sinister because it is much more effective. It is much more effective, because it is, after all, comparatively easy to invest a population with false morale by giving them a false sense of superiority, and it will always break down in a crisis. That is the history of Europe simply—it's one of the reasons that we are in this terrible place.

Still, he cautioned, the country "shouldn't be worried about the Muslim movement, that's not the problem. The problem is to eliminate the conditions which breed the Muslim movement." (Five years later, under contract with Columbia Pictures, Baldwin began the task of adapting Malcolm to the screen.)

That ethnic scapegoating was an unaffordable luxury, moreover, had been another of Baldwin's own lessons. "Georgia has the Negro," he once pithily wrote, slicing through the thickets of rationalization, "and Harlem has the Jew." We have grimly seen where the failure of this more truthful vision has led: to the surreal spectacle of urban activists who would rather picket Korean grocery stores than crack houses, on the assumption that sullen shopkeepers with their pricey tomatoes, and not smiley drug dealers with their discount glass vials, are the true threat to black dignity.

Don't kid yourself, kids get it too.



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TIMES BOOKS

As I say, by 1973 the times had changed; and they have stayed changed. That, I suppose, is our problem. But Baldwin wanted to change with them. That was his problem. And so we lost his skepticism, his critical independence. Baldwin's belated public response to Cleaver's charges was heartbreaking, and all too symptomatic. Now he would turn the other cheek and insist, in *No Name in the Street,* that he actually admired Cleaver's book. Cleaver's attack on him was explained away as a regrettable if naive misunderstanding: the revolutionary had simply been misled by Baldwin's public reputation. Beyond that, he wrote,

> I also felt that I was confused in his mind with the unutterable debasement of the male—with all those faggots, punks, and sissies, the sight and sound of whom, in prison, must have made him vomit more than once. Well, I certainly hope I know more about myself, and the intention of my work than that, but I *am* an odd quantity. So is Eldridge, so are we all. It is a pity that we won't, probably, ever have the time to attempt to define once more the relationship of the odd and disreputable artist to odd and disreputable revolutionary.... And I think we need each other, and have much to learn from each other, and, more than ever, now.

It was an exercise in perverse and willed magnanimity, and it was meant, no doubt, to suggest unruffled strength. Instead it showed weakness, the ill-disguised appeasement of the creature whose day had come and gone.

Did Baldwin know what was happening to him? His essays give no clue; increasingly they came to represent his official voice. But his fiction became the refuge of his growing self-doubts. In 1968 he published *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone.* Formally speaking, it was his least successful work, but in its protagonist, Leo Proudhammer, Baldwin created a perfectly Baldwinian alter ego, a celebrated black artist who, in diction that matched the eloquence of Baldwin's essays, could express the quandaries that came increasingly to trouble his creator. "The day came," he reflects at one point, "when I wished to break my silence and found that I could not speak: the actor could no longer be distinguished from his role." Thus did Baldwin, our elder statesman, who knew better than anyone how a mask could deform the face beneath, chafe beneath his own.

Called to speak before a civil rights rally, Proudhammer ruminates on the contradictions of his position:

> I did not want others to endure my estrangement, that was why I was on the platform; yet was it not, at the least, paradoxical that it was only my estrangement which had placed me there?... It was our privilege, to say nothing of our hope, to attempt to make the world a human dwelling place for us all; and yet—yet—was it not possible that the mighty gentlemen, my honorable and invaluable confreres, by being unable to imagine such a journey as my own, were leaving something of the utmost importance out of their aspirations?

These are not unpolitical reflections, but they are not the reflections of a politician. Contrast Leroi Jones's unflappable conviction, in an essay called "Reflections on Two Hotshots" published in 1963, that "a writer must have a point of view, or he cannot be a good writer. He must be standing somewhere in the world, or else he is not one of *us,* and his commentary then is of little value." It was a carefully aimed arrow, and it would pierce Baldwin's heart.

The threat of being deemed obsolete, or "not one of *us,*" is a fearful thing. *Tell Me How Long* depicts a black artist's growing sense that (in a recurrent phrase) he no longer belongs to himself, that his public role may have depleted the rest of him. Of course, "the burden of representation," as Baldwin once called it, is a common affliction in Afro-American literature, an unfair condition of hardship that black writers frequently face; but few black writers have measured its costs—the price of this particular ticket to ride—as trenchantly as Baldwin. He risked the fate, and in some ways finally succumbed to the fate, that Leo Proudhammer most feared, which was to be "a Jeremiah without convictions."

Desperate to be "one of us," to be loved by his own, Baldwin allowed himself to mouth a script that was not his own. The connoisseur of complexity tried his hand at being an ideologue. To be sure, he could still do anything he wanted with the English essay. The problem was that he no longer knew quite what he wanted, and he cared too much about what others wanted from him. For a generation had arrived that didn't want anything from him—except, perhaps, that he lie down and die. And this, too, has been a consistent dynamic of race and representation in Afro-America. If someone has anointed a black intellectual, be assured that someone else is busily constructing his tumbril.

We stayed in touch, on and off, through the intervening years, often dining at the Ginger Man when he was in New York. Sometimes he would introduce me to his current lover, or speak of his upcoming projects. I did not return to St. Paul de Vence until shortly after his death four-and-a-half years ago at the age of 63. This time I came to meet his brother David. The place had

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changed remarkably in the twenty or so years since Baldwin settled there. The grape arbors are now strung with electric lights. Luxury homes dot the landscape on quarter-acre plots, and in the midst of this congestion stands Baldwin's ten-acre oasis, the only undivided farm acreage left in St. Paul.

When I recounted for David Baldwin the circumstances of my meeting his brother for the first time, his wide eyes grew wider. He rose from the table, went downstairs into the study—where a wall of works by and about Henry James faces you as you enter—and emerged with a manuscript in hand. "This is for you," he said. He handed me a play. It was the last work that James Baldwin completed as he suffered through his final illness, and it was called "The Welcome Table." It was set in the Riviera, at a house much like his own, and among the principal characters were "Edith, an actress-singer/star: Creole, from New Orleans," "Daniel, ex-black Panther, fledgling playwright" with more than a passing resemblance to Cecil Brown, and "Peter Davis, Black American journalist." Peter Davis—who has come to interview a famous star, and whose prodding questions lead to the play's revelations—was, I should say, a far better and more aggressive interviewer than I was; Baldwin, being Baldwin, had transmuted the occasion into a searching drama of revelation and crisis.

Narratives of decline have the appeal of simplicity, but Baldwin's career will not fit that mold. "Unless a writer is extremely old when he dies, in which case he has probably become a neglected institution, his death must always seem untimely," he wrote in 1961, giving us fair warning. "This is because a real writer is always shifting and changing and searching." Reading his late essays, I would like to imagine him embarking on a period of intellectual resurgence. Despite the unfortunate pronouncements of his later years, I believe that he was finding his course again, and exploring the instability of all the categories that divide us. As he wrote in "Here Be Monsters," an essay published two years before his death, and with which he chose to conclude *The Price of the Ticket*, his collected nonfiction: "Each of us, helplessly and forever, contains the other—male in female, female in male, white in black, and black in white. We are part of each other. Many of my countrymen appear to find this fact exceedingly inconvenient and even unfair, and so, very often, do I. But none of us can do anything about it." We needed to hear those words two decades ago, and we especially need to hear them now.

Now we are struggling in this country to fathom the rage in Los Angeles; and slowly we are realizing how intertwined, as Baldwin insisted, are the destinies of black and white America, and how easily one can lay waste to the other in the fury of interracial fratricide. Thirty years ago, Baldwin believed that an effort by the handful of "relatively conscious" blacks and whites might be able to avert the prophecy of the old spiritual: "God gave Noah the rainbow sign, No more water, the fire next time!" The belief proved difficult to sustain. Good intentions—increasingly scarce these days—seem easily defeated by the cycles of poverty, the structural as well as the cultural determinants of urban decay, alienation, and hopelessness. Today, as black intellectuals try to sort outrage from opportunism, political protest from simple criminality, they may wonder if the sense of mutuality that Baldwin promoted can long survive, or if his "elegant despair" alone will endure.

But perhaps times are due to change again. An influential black intellectual avant-garde in Britain has resurrected Baldwin as a patron saint, and a new generation of readers has come to value just those qualities of ambivalence and equivocality, just that sense of the contingency of identity, that made him useless to the ideologues of liberation and anathema to so many black nationalists. Even Baldwin's fiercest antagonists seem now to have welcomed him back to the fold. Like everyone else, I guess, we like our heroes dead. •

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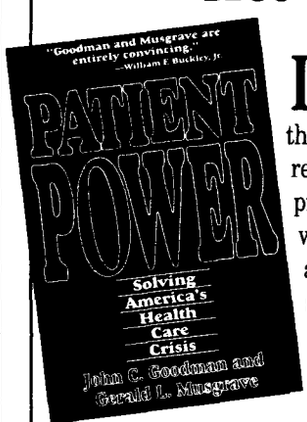
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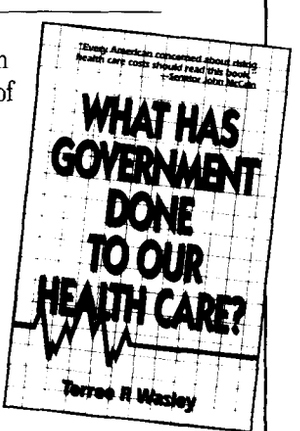
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The Gulag Circus

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October, Eight O'Clock by Norman Manea

(Grove Weidenfeld, 224 pp., $18.95)

A desperate demonstrator popping up from behind the rows of disciplined applauders to flash some hastily unfolded banner before the eyes of a visiting foreign statesman: this was the way in which most of the major literary works that came from Eastern and Central Europe during a half century of communism tried to catch the attention of the West. If any of them made a stir in this hemisphere, they did so because, all their other merits aside, they had something urgent and easily remembered to say about life under totalitarian rule.

That much seems obvious. It is amazing, though, that all these pressing messages essentially came down to two simple similes. The kind of literature best symbolized by Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* stuck under the Western reader's nose a banner that read: LIFE = CONCENTRATION CAMP. The other kind, of which Kundera's *The Joke* is an example, complemented that equation with a different one: LIFE = CIRCUS. The apparent discrepancy could not be fully explained by one writer's proclivity to somber reflection and another's inclination to daredevil ridicule. It was rather that each formula identified a different quality of totalitarianism, its unlimited brutality or its unlimited absurdity.

To be more precise, each kind of writer had sense enough to view the two qualities as two sides of one coin. It would be hard indeed for the Solzhenitsyn-type writer to overlook the absurdities of everyday existence or for the Kundera-type writer to underestimate the degree of sheer terror and persecution in their respective countries. As a result, most of their banners were double-sided, too. The real difference lay not in diagnosis but in emphasis, in the writer's understanding of which side, which punishing part of reality, needed most urgently to be forced upon the free world's fifteen-second attention span, which side epitomized the unique features of totalitarian life there most accurately.

This difference of emphasis itself depended, in turn, on something rather trivial: on the fact that communism was not exactly the same thing in Budapest or Vilna as it was in Bucharest or Vladivostok, and not the same in the early '60s as it had been in the early '50s. Forcibly standardized as it was, even life under totalitarian rule had its ebbs and flows, appeared in various shades of monotony, became now and then slightly more tolerable or intolerable than usual. With the pressure fully on, you were in no mood for jokes or *The Joke.* With the pressure relenting, if only the tiniest bit, you felt more like writing (and reading) *Laughable Loves* than *The Gulag Archipelago.* If, in the wake of some inexplicable fit of liberalization in the Politburo, a prison camp is issued a new set of regulations and the prison guard is suddenly forbidden to shoot indiscriminately at the prisoners, his threatening posture looks clownish to them, and the boldest among them may even mock him behind his back. Once his right to shoot is restored, however, there is no laughing within earshot anymore.

An either-or situation, more or less. But what would you get if a clown was made a camp guard, with the right to shoot and to torture to his heart's content, and still remained a clown? What would you get if you crossbred a concentration camp with a circus, married the deepest sense of fear to the deepest sense of absurdity, without any hope of ever separating them? You would get that unique anomaly and epitome of Eastern European totalitarianism: Romania under Ceausescu.

"Unique" requires a qualification. Though the human capacity for evil seems to be inexhaustible, the repertory of specific shapes that evil can assume is rather limited. Reading Sade today, we shake our heads: what a bore! Any Auschwitz kapo, any Lubyanka torturer, was far more inventive in inflicting pain. Similarly, Ceausescu was not just a one-time freak. There have been figures in modern history—Emperor Bokassa, Idi Amin, possibly Kim Il Sung, had we been given a chance to know the fellow more intimately—who displayed a comparable aptitude for signing, with equal ease, receipts for custom-made golden toilet bowls and death sentences for thousands of their starved subjects.

Still, in his important new books, Norman Manea, a Romanian writer of fiction and essays who was born in 1936 and managed to leave his country for good only in 1986, gives us a taste of something beyond the scope of even our twentieth-century imagination. Even the jaded reader who thinks he has seen them all, from the Ayatollah to Zhdanov, from Albania to Zhejiang, cannot help but be impressed by what is portrayed in Manea's brilliant essay "On Clowns." This combination of extreme oppression of the people and total freedom for the leader to carry out his wildest fantasies, of ludicrously pedantic control and absolutely boundless idiocy, has had a couple of worthy forerunners, but Ceausescu certainly beat them all.

For a start, consider that this is a country in which one of every fifteen citizens is a full-time policeman. The most privileged and the most lucrative branch of the police, the Securitate, wields unlimited power and is free to do anything from committing assassinations to blackmailing citizens into informing on their own families and friends. This force is a state within a state. It is provided, among other things, with nothing less than a specially built and enormous network of underground passages beneath the streets of the capital.

Every telephone is bugged. Every typewriter has to be registered and brought at regular intervals to police headquarters to make sure that its letters have not been tampered with. Official censorship does not have to exist, since publishers and editors are personally responsible for the ideological purity of their publications, and most of the authors are intimidated or corrupted anyway. Archives and churches have been destroyed. In the cities, the older quarters lined with individual houses are bulldozed to make room for housing projects, so that tenants in each new "block" can be kept under more efficient surveillance by a "block guard." Similar destruction goes on in the countryside,

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where individual farms are razed to "eliminate the distinctions between city and country" (translation: to deprive farmers of their independent income and turn them into wage earners at the mercy of the state).

The dictator's brainchild in the area of economics is complete autarky (the only way to save his country from a dangerous influx of foreigners as well as from international pressure in the area of human rights). In order to pay off the enormous foreign debt, austerity policies are implemented so relentlessly that streets are dark, apartments cold, and citizens starved. Since labor is obviously in demand, each and every woman of childbearing age has to submit regularly to gynecological examinations to make sure that she has not undergone an illegal abortion. At the same time, the demand for labor yields to a higher principle in one particular situation, that is, when ethnic minorities—not all of them, just Jews and Germans—are allowed to emigrate. This is done, of course, for an appropriate remuneration paid to the treasury, which is indeed a stroke of genius: the humanitarian readiness to "reunite families" improves the regime's image abroad while remaining a profitable slave trade. Other than that, citizens are tied to their workplaces, not to mention constrained by thousands of prohibitions concerning virtually anything from meeting foreigners without official permission to owning house pets (a ban implemented as systematically as any other: cats and dogs are routinely exterminated, ostensibly to allow the working people uninterrupted sleep during the night).

These would be some of the basic elements of Romania's image as one huge concentration camp. But this particular banner's two sides have to be acknowledged simultaneously: under Ceausescu, Romania's aspect as the monstrous arena of a circus is not contradicted by its encirclement by barbed wire. To begin with, the clown who is its absolute ruler is barely literate. He commands no language except his native one, and even his use of that language makes his subjects wince. His spouse, despite her own lack of any education, bears professorial titles, and is entrusted with dictatorial powers over the nation's academic and scientific research. While the population starves and freezes, the ruling couple lives among luxuries that would make an African emperor green with envy.

Their official cult, exaggerated and disseminated by the media day and night, is of the sort that Stalin himself, had he lived longer, would consider a little too much for his own good. Personal astrologers assure the clown that a man of such genius as his graces the planet no more frequently than once every 500 years. The nation's leading poets write odes to him. Children in schools are trained in techniques of spontaneous adoration. A large part of the capital's historic downtown is razed to make room for the clown's immense palace, a gift from the grateful people. Foreign heads of state receive him and his ridiculous wife with the greatest honors, and pay official visits in return, pretending wisely that they have never heard about the training camps for Arab terrorists that he maintains on his country's territory. If something ever bothers him (after all, life is no bed of roses, even if everyone on earth loves you so much), if, for instance, a new American ambassador turns out to be black (what a boorish gesture of disrespect!), the clown is not above throwing a spectacular tantrum or two.

Generally speaking, he just can't help being the best at everything he does, which is why, despite being so universally loved, he must take so many precautions against enemies animated by envy. Hence his innumerable bodyguards and stand-ins, a special detachment of the Securitate checking every piece of his food for possible poisoning and inciner-

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ating every piece of his clothing after just a single wearing to prevent a possible attempt at killing him with radiation. He is even the best at bear hunting. Manea's depiction of the clown's hunting parties deserves to be quoted extensively:

> The bears tranquilized, foaming at the mouth, bound, prevented from eating and drinking for many days before the hunt begins. The aerial surveillance of the hunting area. The red presidential helicopter landing in front of the castle. The guests from the Party circus, from the circus press, from the foreign embassies. Bit players from the secret police dressed as waiters, and the clown's bodyguards waiting in ditches, camouflaged in the underbrush. The portable fence deployed like a funnel with the opening exactly in front of the president's stand. The tranquilized bears gradually awaken and appear in the arena, unsteady and bellowing. The first Hunter of the Circus taking aim, closing his right eye, then his left. The moment the comrade places his finger on the trigger, the Securitate snipers camouflaged in the underbrush also fire, with silencers, picking off the game. To the rhythm of the national anthem, the Supreme Clown thrusts out his chest for the gold medal; he is the best marksman of the time.

The satirical tone of this passage should not mislead us. Manea is too profound a witness to place his gift for observation in the service of another sensationalist account of how many pairs of shoes the executed despot had in his closets or what kind of pornographic movies the First Lady was fond of watching. (As it happens, Mrs. Ceausescu's favorite kind were films that recorded the intimate life of the most powerful of her husband's henchmen, all made with the use of hidden cameras by another special detachment of the Securitate.) "I tried to ignore him as best I could," Manea confesses. "I took good care not to hate him, because that would have meant granting him too much importance." Manea aims, and reaches, deeper. Finally what matters for him is the phenomenon of an entire nation's life under this simultaneously grotesque and terrifying rule.

How can people mentally adjust to living in a continuous state of fear, humiliation, loss of perspective, uncertainty, and the awareness that their lives are being irrevocably wasted with each passing day? How can a solitary, thinking individual, equipped with nothing more than his instinctive belief in some ultimate rationality of the world, cope with a world around him that is anything but rational? In the five extraordinary essays that constitute *On Clowns*, Manea analyzes the few options that remained to people in a place like Romania under a man like Ceausescu. Joining the clownery, at least in order to secure the part of the straight man for oneself, was the most popular option, but it was also the most illusory one: the casting decisions were not exactly up to you. More obviously, the openly critical stand was out of the question, unless one was suicidal; and it was also unfeasible, since in Romania the only network of information and publication was the official one. Nobody could seriously count on seeing his statements in print ungarbled anyway.

In the essay "Censor's Report," Manea drives home this point with a very unusual piece of evidence: an authentic report on his own book that he commissioned secretly from a retired censor in order to understand what ideological flaws made it impossible for one of his own novels to appear. In another essay, "The History of an Interview," he demonstrates, again on the basis of his own experience, what the consequences were if an unorthodox statement did, by some miracle of totalitarian sloppiness, make it into print; a furious smear campaign in the official media—needless to say, with no right of reply—was by no means the worst that could happen.

And yet even Romania under Ceausescu, with its unique brand of hopelessness, was proof of the truth of the perennial paradox of life under tyranny: to survive—that is, to retain your inner freedom—you must behave as if you don't care about surviving. To save your soul, you must be willing to put your body at risk. In Hitler's or Stalin's camps, the victim's options were reduced to just two: help the killers or be killed yourself. In Ceausescu's Romania, similarly, there were no other options beside the spiritual suicide of acquiescence and the physical suicide of protest.

Just as the essence of truly totalitarian censorship lies in not merely deleting certain opinions of the writer but also in making the writer himself write some others, Ceausescu's almost ideal totalitarian rule (nobody's perfect) consisted in making not just active resistance, but also passive non-participation, a crim You were either "with us" or "against us"; no maybes, no in-betweens, no fellow-traveling, no "inner emigration." I can imagine Manea's bitter smile as he quotes the following cocksure remark by Ernst Jünger, a writer who obviously never had to live in Romania:

> The artist has to focus on his painting, his poetry, his sculpture, the rest is ridiculous. That is why I could never criticize an artist who benefits from the favors of a tyrant.

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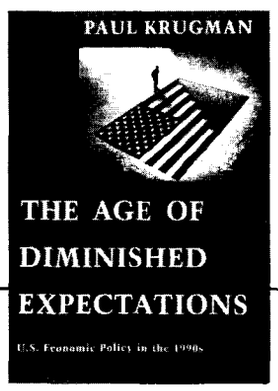

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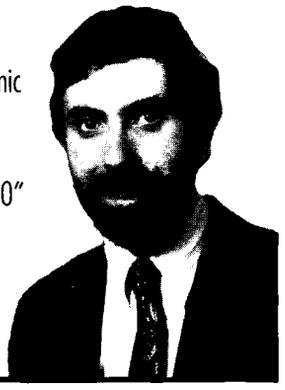

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He can't say: "I'll wait until the tyrant is overthrown!" because that might take ten years, and in the meantime his creative power would wane.

Oh sure, anybody born east of the Elbe would retort, it does a heap of good for the artist to "focus on his painting, his poetry, his sculpture" when, say, a police squad bangs on his door at 5 a.m. to perform for him, courtesy of the tyrant, some beneficial service such as a thorough search of his study. Manea put it less sardonically:

> "It's . . . not just a question of the ridiculous but also, first and foremost, of the horror, the destruction of the last enclaves of quotidian normality, the daily risk of physical and spiritual death. . . . Jünger's statement applies *only* to old or young democracies in which one still has the option to ignore the political brouhaha, or at least to put it in parentheses. That, however, becomes impossible when the ridiculous reigns supreme over all of human life, tortures everyone without respite, and slowly but surely cripples them: then it is not only *the rest* that is ridiculous, but the whole, and it can't be ignored because it won't ignore you, won't let you go.

"The whole," in the case of Romania, included much more than just its aberrant condition under Ceausescu. Every aberration is just a stage—sometimes final, sometimes intermediary—in a longer process of pathological change. Accordingly, no tyranny can be understood if the observer focuses solely on its present day. The answer to the exasperated question about how on earth such a system can exist may well lie in the past. Thus, for Manea, the Romania of Ceausescu was a child of the Romania of the Iron Guard.

Not that he conveniently overlooks all the systemic differences between the right-wing and left-wing totalitarianisms. Manea provides a subtle analysis in which the contrasts and the continuations are shown in their complex, intertwined relationship. His remarkable essay "Felix Culpa" (which appeared originally in these pages) is particularly illuminating in this regard. By revealing and thoroughly analyzing the grim and complicated case of the great scholar Mircea Eliade and his lack of remorse for his support of the Iron Guard, Manea achieves more than the spectacular unmasking of a crypto- and once-not-so-crypto-Fascist. He also illuminates a deeper affinity between the overt and shamelessly candid inhumanity of Nazi-like ultranationalism and the Communist farce of "humanist" and "internationalist" pretenses. The powerful attraction of both is the same: the exhilaration of being relieved of the human

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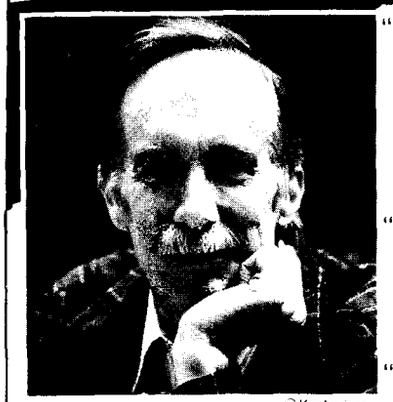

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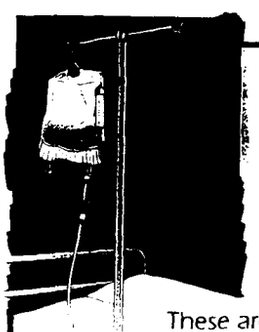

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responsibility to think, make judgments, and take sides on one's own, the thrill of relief in belonging to this or another myth-sanctioned community with its crystal-clear instructions on whom to hate and whom to worship.

The situation of the individual voluntarily giving up his own thoughts and emotions for the illusory safety of a collective creed is the recurring theme of Manea's penetrating essays. As a writer of fiction, he treats this same subject in the concrete terms of individual experience—the experience of a life that happens to have been stretched between the years of the Holocaust and the years of the demise of communism, with the interminable Ceausescu decades in between. Manea's short stories, which have been collected in *October, Eight O'Clock*, have essentially one protagonist, shown at an early stage of his life, either as a several-year-old boy deported with his family during wartime and put in a Nazi concentration camp in the Ukraine or, as in the excellent story "The Instructor," as a teenager in postwar Romania, torn apart by the conflicting demands put to him by the Jewish faith of his family on the one hand and his own infatuation with communism on the other.

This protagonist is undoubtedly a literary creation, but his life story reveals too many analogies with the author's own to treat him as pure fiction. Still, it is fiction's familiar set of devices—a specific narrative perspective, a personal point of view, a way of centering a story around a symbolic fact or object—that transforms this autobiographical material into real literature, and endows it with much more power than a memoiristic account could have. A fine example is the story "Proust's Tea," which recounts a moment of bliss experienced by the child-hero when, in an indescribable wartime hospital, he is given a cup of real tea and a bag of biscuits by a Red Cross volunteer. If, in Proust, the taste of a madeleine dipped in tea enabled the narrator's memory to turn back and revive the entirety of the basically continuous experience of his life, Manea's narrator draws the precisely opposite conclusion: "There are... certain gifts whose only quality and only flaw is that they cannot be exchanged for anything else. Such gifts cannot, at some later time, be recalled, repossessed, or returned."

Manea's authority in making this statement is considerable: obviously he has lived in a world where a sip of tea and a biscuit could mean one's survival, and not merely, as in Proust, a restoration of one's fond memories. But what makes this story genuinely complex and humane (perhaps I should say complex and therefore humane) is that the narrator is above the easy and all-too-banal satisfaction of ridiculing Proust—or subtlety of feeling and thought, or civility, or individualism, or art—from the position of someone who survived the Nazi and Communist terrors. He is a survivor, but one who has not allowed himself to be contaminated by the human bestiality he has experienced, at least not to claim that this experience revealed to him the complete truth about human nature. In fact, what he has survived is precisely the rule of the claim to complete truth.

Moreover, the child re-creates, rather than rejects, the Proustian experience—unwittingly, of course, and in his own macabre way. The pleasure of the tea revives in his several-year-old memory a scene from the not-so-distant yet almost mythical past when his deported family, reduced to struggling for physical survival, had not yet been torn apart and decimated. What he remembers most vividly is a single dirty sugar cube that his grandfather had miraculously saved. Each time family members gathered to drink "greenish water infused with local herbs picked in those alien places," they could at least stare at the sugar cube hanging on a string from the ceiling lamp, and taste imaginary sweetness:

> They had to stare at it patiently for a long time, and had to sip the tea slowly, until everyone felt his lips, tongue, mouth, his entire being refreshed, mellowed by the memory of a world they must not give up, because, Grandfather firmly believed, it had not given them up and could not do without them.

There is a world of difference between the well-known remark made once by Adorno about the impossibility of poetry after Auschwitz and what we hear in this sentence. It is, in a sense, the same distinction that divided Jünger's "the rest is ridiculous" from Manea's "there is no 'rest.'" True, the narrator speaks from the position of someone who knows, many years later, that his grandfather's confidence was nothing more than an illusion, that "a return" he so firmly believed in "would not come to pass." Still, the story's last words sum up the narrator's own life not as a process of shedding illusions, but as the gradual loss of "the cruelty of indifference" and its replacement by "a feeling being."

There is no discrepancy here. The world in which Manea had spent his entire life until the moment of his emigration—the world steeped in "the cruelty of indifference" from Nazism through communism, the murderous barbarity of the Iron Guard replaced with the clownish but no less murderous barbarity of Ceausescu, and then perversely continued rather than ended with Ceausescu's no less barbaric execution—such a world was obviously the exact opposite of a world to which "a feeling being" could ever aspire, a world which we all "must not give up." Yet remembrance of the fact that barbaric bloodthirstiness and clownish stupidity do not add up to the sum total of human nature, that even under the worst circumstances the human soul may not be entirely consumed by cruelty and fear,

Lines in Furtherance of a Jumprope Rhyme

collected by E.A. Botkin in
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"Apples, peaches,
Pumpkin pie.
How many years
Until I die?"

Plague and pestilence,
Rot and mould.
How many seasons
Before I'm cold?

Hogan's Heroes,
Cosby, Laugh-In.
How many months
Until the coffin?

Helga, Olga,
Astrid, Ingrid.
How many weeks
Before I'm rigid?

Hostess Twinkies,
Wonder Bread.
How many days
Until I'm dead?

Unicorn, sphinx,
Phoenix, griffin.
How many hours
Before I stiffen?

Purgatory,
Heaven, Hell.
How many minutes
Until I smell?

The New York Times,
Le Monde, Der Sturm.
How many breaths
Before the worm?

DONALD HALL

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that under the worst of tyrannies the human community may not be solely composed of executioners and informers, is rather like that sugar cube dangling from the ceiling in Manea's story. Even if what it ultimately expresses—the hope that "a return" to the world of "feeling beings" is always possible—is a delusion, we better not throw it away.

STANISLAW BARANCZAK is the author of *Breathing Under Water and Other East European Essays*, recently issued in paperback by Harvard University Press.

Through a Glass Darkly

BY ANTHONY GRAFTON

The Broken Staff: Judaism Through Christian Eyes by Frank E. Manuel

(Harvard University Press, 363 pp., $34.95)

In the years between 1565 and 1572, a young French Protestant visited Jewish communities in southern France and Italy. He dressed in black, like one of the aristocratic *mignons* of the French court, and wore his hair and his goatee fashionably short. But his behavior was anything but aristocratic or reserved. He argued theology with the Jews whom he met, in their own language, which he had taught himself by reading. "They liked me," he recalled forty years later, "and were surprised that I spoke Hebrew well; they said that I spoke the Hebrew of the Bible." And he returned their admiration. The Jews, he later recalled, explained the Bible with learning and intelligence. Unlike the Christians, they took care of their poor. Even their women spoke Hebrew and read books in Ladino. One young woman in Avignon even shared a meal with him—naturally, she would eat only fish—and told him a long joke about the shortcomings of the local rabbi.

The young Frenchman, Joseph Scaliger, eventually became the greatest scholar in Europe. Awarded a permanent research position in 1593 at Leiden, the most innovative university in the world, he churned out vast volumes and short essays on the history of the ancient world. His knowledge of Hebrew and his mastery of Jewish sources remained fundamental to his project, which embraced ancient and medieval Israel as well as Greece and Rome. Scaliger showed that the rabbinical calendar used in his day was a product of Babylonian science, not divine revelation. He argued presciently that the Last Supper was a modification of the Jewish Passover, using the Haggadah to explicate the account in the Gospel of Mark. And he discovered, and found a name for, Hellenistic Judaism, the brand of Judaism practiced by hundreds of thousands of Jews who lived in the centuries just before and after the beginning of the Christian era, read their Bible and conducted their synagogue services in Greek, and produced a massive and fascinating literature, also in Greek.

Scaliger continued to talk to Jews as well as to read their texts. In February 1600 he went into mourning at the death of Philippus Ferdinandus, a Jewish convert from Poland, who had given him several months of lessons in the Talmud. Scaliger freely admitted that only a Jew trained from boyhood by immersion could really find his way around the Talmudic texts, and lamented that he could make no further progress without a tutor. Still, he used the material that Ferdinandus had given him, with characteristic audacity, to illustrate the New Testament. Many of Christ's sayings, he told his students, were identical with the teachings of the rabbis; they, too, had taught their disciples to turn the other cheek. Evidently Christianity had inherited more than prophecies from Judaism.

Though a brilliant Hebraist, Scaliger was no philo-Semite. He dismissed rabbinical commentators on the Bible as ignorant and fanciful. He made fun of the disorderliness of traditional Jewish learning; even Ferdinandus, he claimed, had admired Scaliger's superior command of Hebrew grammar, which Jews did not study at yeshiva. As a thinker, Maimonides won Scaliger's respect (as he would win Leibniz's); otherwise Scaliger felt little but contempt for the living tradition of Jewish thought and exegesis.

Scholars have long studied the steps of Scaliger's intricate dance with Jewish sources and informants, teasing out the complex mixture of interest and repulsion that he felt for them. Jacob Bernays, the brilliant Jewish classicist whose career in German universities was hampered by his loyalty to the code of his fathers, interrupted his phosphorescently positive biography of Scaliger, whom he saw as the creator of modern philology, to make fun of his idol's errors in reading the Talmud. The nineteenth-century founders of "the scientific study of Judaism" deplored Scaliger's anti-Semitism even as they drew on his scholarship. (The great Israeli scholar David Flusser still finds it useful to study Scaliger's work—and necessary to criticize some of his views.)

But even those who have criticized Scaliger usually put him on a pedestal. Historians have treated him as a lonely pioneer, whose expertise set him apart from virtually all Christians even as his religious prejudices and historical method set him apart from the Jews. Frank E. Manuel also admires Scaliger, but he has no interest in carving marble busts or building elegant niches. In his new book he puts Scaliger and dozens of other Christians who studied Jewish texts into their historical and cultural context. He shows that Scaliger's work formed only one special case of a fascinating general phenomenon: the massive enterprise of reading Jewish texts and writing Jewish history that engaged the efforts of dozens of Christian scholars between the late fifteenth century and the present. Scaliger emerges not as a unique giant but as a recognizable figure in a curious and crowded tapestry, which Manuel's historical weaving allows us to see, for the first time, as a whole.

Manuel shows that the story of Europe's discovery of Judaism was as rich, as complex, and sometimes as paradoxical as the better-known story of the discovery of ancient Greece and Rome. Like the classical Renaissance, the discovery of Judaism required the mastery of hard languages and the invention of new scholarly techniques. Unlike the Greeks and the Romans, however, the Jews were still alive and often spoke for themselves. This Other lived within Europe's own borders. The rise of Jewish scholarship, accordingly, involved centuries of conversation and debate as well as extended textual study. Ranging the languages and centuries with enviable ease, Manuel tells his complicated story with clarity and panache. In his pages rabbis and rabid anti-Semites, philosophers and *philosophes*, philologists and theologians meet and debate the meaning of the Jewish past and present.

Manuel describes his book as pure intellectual history, a study of "the higher culture of Western Christendom—Kiryat Sefer, city of books"—as it wrestled with Judaism. But *The Broken Staff* defies classification. It is the precipitate of a range of

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personal experience that no ordinary academic could call on. Like other Jewish intellectuals of his generation, Manuel did not immediately find useful employment when he finished his training at Harvard in the early 1930s. Anti-Semitism and the Depression made a lethal environment for scholarly careers. Still, he did not surrender either to the bitterness that unemployment inspired or to the illusions that weightlessness generated in so many of his contemporaries.

He worked for the Federal Writers' Project and wrote about politics for *The Nation*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *The New York Times*. His first book—based on extensive library research and first-hand investigation in the hills of the Asturias—dealt not with texts and ideas, but with the background of the Spanish Civil War. It is a splendid piece of polemical writing, sad and savage, ironic but humane, honest about the faults of the Republic and devastating about the aims and the methods of fascism. In the '40s he worked and wrote, with equal dedication and with the same lack of illusions, for the new state of Israel.

Half a century later Manuel remains as perceptive about the uses of myth and propaganda and as sensitive to ambiguities as he was when young. When he comments on the anti-Semitism of the *philosophes* or evokes the contradictions of German Semitic scholarship, he speaks with an authority that only lived history can confer. The book moves on the level of high intellectual history; but it offers insight into some of the lowest events of this low century.

The Broken Staff is a work of erudition as well as reflection. Manuel's learning resembles that of his early modern heroes, like Scaliger, rather than that of a normal modern professor. Few students of European intellectual history know Hebrew, even the biblical Hebrew that Scaliger taught himself. Hardly any own the keys to the splendid mansions of commentary and compilation, statements of legal principle and curious stories, that the rabbis reared over the centuries. They described their tradition, accurately, as *siyag la-Torah* (a "fence around the law")—an obstacle far higher, and far harder for students foreign to the tradition to climb, than any presented by the classical literatures. Manuel, who learned his way through this maze of textual wonders as a boy in Boston, hears the voices of Jewish scholars as well as Christian scholars. He assesses what the Christians made of Jewish texts—and what the Jews made of their own texts—with a brevity that shows a real command of the material, but he never does an injustice to its complexities.

Manuel's approach, however, is hardly that of a traditional Jewish scholar. *The Broken Staff*, with its rigorous study of the myths about Judaism deconstructed and created by generations of Christian scholars, draws "into an uneasy relationship," he says, "my knowledge of the intellectual experience of Western Christendom and the Hebraic studies of my youth." Manuel's graduate training lay in a purely secular subject, French labor history. When he began to teach in the 1940s, he devoted himself to the history of several distinct but related intellectual traditions: the development of utopian systems, the different forms of philosophic history, the myths of science and the sciences of myth in early modern Europe.

By the time his great history of *Utopian Thought in the Western World*, written with Fritzie Manuel, appeared in 1979, Manuel had established himself as one of the most creative and learned European historians alive. He has written expert accounts of an astonishing range of thinkers: Bacon and Newton, Jean LeClerc and Henri de Saint-Simon, Vico and Jefferson, and many lesser figures crowd the pages of his many books. And Manuel's erudition, his mastery of canonical and uncanonical texts, underpins—and becomes visible at dozens of points in—his new book.

Even in the heyday of the history of ideas, moreover, Manuel never practiced the fashionable, armchair-bound version of the field, that is, the gentlemanly pursuit of familiar Big Ideas through the well-printed pages of standard texts. In each of his studies Manuel set out to interpret texts and ideas critically and to set them in a richly evoked biographical and historical context. He combined excavation in European archives with heroic amounts of reading in American libraries. (In the 1960s one would see him, already a legendary figure, toiling in on his crutches to work at the Central Branch of the New York Public Library; here he eloquently praises his beloved Boston libraries, Widener and the Athenaeum, which provided the very large sample of early modern Hebraica he has now analyzed.)

And he always remained aware of the potential of new questions and methods, which have also helped to enliven his writing. In the '60s he applied the new questions of psychohistory to Newton, producing a vivid analysis of the great scientist's needs and compulsions that certainly stimulated—though it generally did not convince—Newtonian scholars. During the last decade he has applied the new methods of the history of the book to the intellectual relations of Jews and Christians. He brings out the importance of printers and librarians, of the particular forms in which texts appeared and the places where they were consulted, in shaping Christian images of Judaism.

Manuel's new book, in other words, has none of the abstractness that so often makes the history of ideas uninviting. Quite the contrary. He reconstructs a milieu as deftly as an individual argument, and retains his sharp eye for the revealing detail. *The Broken Staff*, like his other works, swarms with wonderful vignettes. He vividly describes, for example, the Jews of Amsterdam, so often idealized by those who didn't know them. Mixed in origins, divided by class, and often short of temper, they quarreled viciously with one another but hid their disagreements from the Christians. Yet they failed entirely to deceive their neighbor Rembrandt, an observer more perceptive than any scholar. He still appreciated their spirituality and even illustrated one of Menasseh ben Israel's books. Manuel's history of ideas carries the reader not on a paper chase, but on a fascinating voyage from library to synagogue to coffee-house to study. The journey is at least as rewarding as the arrival.

Manuel carries his immense learning very lightly. As a teacher at Brandeis (where he belonged to its justly famous founding faculty) and at New York University, he lectured with an unrivaled combination of erudition and wit. He has always insisted, by precept and by example, that the historian's virtues necessarily include clarity of thought and speech. When told by a student in his NYU seminar that the ideas he had presented in a confused oral report were simply too complex to be expressed in words, Manuel replied: "This is not yet a painting class." *The Broken Staff* provides a massive and vital lesson in the uses of clarity and

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irony—both of them qualities of which the academic world has no surplus.

The book begins in the Middle Ages, with a series of fragmentary but revealing encounters. Manuel describes Christian theologians reading and responding to Rashi's commentary on the Bible and Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*. A few medieval Christians, like the mendicant Raymund Martini, developed an extraordinary command of rare Jewish sources. But erudition could not dispel prejudices or prevent fundamental errors of interpretation. Martini used his erudition to argue that the Jews really knew that they should convert to Christianity. They refused to do so from obstinacy, not from principle. Both Martini's theories and his proof texts bob up again and again, unsinkable as corks in water, in the course of Manuel's tale.

During the Renaissance the scene begins to glow, as Manuel brings powerfully engaged intellects on stage and trains his light on them. The gallant philosopher Pico della Mirandola marks the real beginning of modern Christian Hebrew scholarship, in its contradictions as well as its strengths. In 1486, still in his 20s, Pico tried to hold a public debate at Rome on 900 theses drawn from all fields of knowledge. The noble oration about the power of the human soul that he wrote as prologue to this exercise (which he was not allowed to carry out) is now read in Western Civilization courses around the world.

One esoteric brand of knowledge that Pico defended in it with particular zeal was what he called "Cabala": the Jewish tradition whose exponents tried to find hidden truths and unlock natural forces by unriddling the secret meanings encoded into the letters of the Hebrew text of the Bible. Pico spent a large part of his enormous fortune on kabbalistic manuscripts, which he took as the core, if not the whole, of the oral Torah that the Jews had preserved since the two laws, written and oral, were first revealed to Moses. He decided that they offered vital confirmation for Christian doctrines about the Trinity and much else. His message deeply impressed philologists and philosophers for the next century and more.

Pico urged his contemporaries to study the Hebrew language and Jewish texts in search of further mysteries. He knew some Hebrew himself. Still, as Manuel carefully shows, drawing on the work of the late Chaim Wirszubski, his approach to Jewish tradition was at least as problematic and indirect as Scaliger's. He could not read the difficult kabbalistic texts in the original Hebrew and depended on translations made for him by one Flavius Mithridates, the converted son of a Jewish rabbi from Sicily. But Mithridates was hardly a reliable informant. He knew his Hebrew and Aramaic very well—a two-hour Good Friday sermon that he preached in the Vatican in 1481 deeply impressed the pope and cardinals, who loved his fluent pronunciation of strange texts from the Talmud—but he made his sources say what his audience wanted them to say, introducing trinitarian and other messages into the Jewish texts that he rendered into Latin at Pico's expense.

Pico might have been warier of a man who demanded not only money but a *na'aryafe*, a handsome boy, as the price of his work. Later in his short life Pico became one of the most perceptive critics of astrology ever to sort myth from history and sense from nonsense in that strange mixture of science and superstition, but at this time he happily paid for a version of Judaism that seemed so solidly attested by rare sources. After all, it filled his needs. It enabled him to use the treasures of ancient Jewish sages while still revealing the errors of modern Jewish rabbis, who failed to see the implications of their own sacred text until Pico helpfully pointed them out. Thus he led Christian scholars into a labyrinth of historical error and fruitless debate, from which they would not finally escape until our own time, when Gershom Scholem and others finally restored the Kabbalah to historical scholarship.

Pico's story is not identical to Scaliger's. This curious, open-eyed Christian scholar worked overtime to turn the Other of Judaism into a familiar spirit, while his sly informant tailored the sources to fit needs that would have horrified their authors. (One wonders if Mithridates allowed himself a chuckle, from time to time, at the gullibility of his new patrons.) Scaliger, by contrast, tried to make the familiar unfamiliar. He used Jewish sources to make early Christianity itself seem newly strange. But both men felt the same mixture of desire and disgust, the same need to recover the lost messages of the ancient Jews and to repudiate the theology of the modern ones. Both depended on Jewish informants for guidance into the sources. And both contributed trickles to what swelled, as Manuel shows, into a vast river of historical research and theological debate—one to which Protestants and Catholics, deists and atheists contributed, one continually whipped into crashing rapids as it struck the same rocks of assumption and prejudice that Pico and Scaliger clung to.

The Renaissance engagement with the Jews was not confined to Pico's effort to

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find Christian dogmas in Jewish mysticism. Manuel lays out a spectrum of Renaissance responses to the Jewish world. The first great Protestant theologian, Martin Luther, saw the Old Testament as superseded and regarded the Jews with loathing. The second great Protestant theologian, by contrast, read the Old Testament as a rich source of examples of human conduct and political principles: John Calvin taught his contemporaries to avoid allegory and to stick, like the medieval Spanish-Jewish commentator Abraham Ibn Ezra, to the plain sense of the text.

A German lawyer, Johannes Reuchlin, succumbed to the temptations of mysticism and steeped himself in the Kabbalah. But a French lawyer, Jean Bodin, brilliantly ransacked the Talmud and the commentaries for the texts that he cited in his dangerous philo-Semitic dialogue on the merits of the various world religions (a book so explosive that it circulated only in clandestine handwritten copies until the nineteenth century). Jews attracted the interest and sharpened the tempers of orthodox and libertines alike, and Manuel's treatment establishes the Jewish Renaissance alongside the Greek and Latin ones in all its complexity and density.

The first of the book's true centers of gravity, however, lies in the strange world of seventeenth-century erudition, the lost continent of esoteric knowledge once prowled by scholarly dinosaurs like Scaliger and the Buxtorfs, Selden and Ussher. Few modern scholars have ever invaded this forbidding territory, bounded as it is on every side by toweringly unreadable books in closely printed Latin, studded with interminable quotations in Greek and Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac. As Manuel says, "The grand folios poured forth by the presses of Amsterdam, Venice, Leiden, Rome, and Frankfurt, preserved in university treasure rooms, are now rarely disturbed by intruders. Modern scavengers have not often bothered to pick the bones of these worthies or plagiarize them, or even savor the content of their works."

Yet, as he also shows, these books were far from unimportant. Their authors included some of the dominant intellectual figures of the seventeenth century, such as the English lawyer and historian John Selden, a self-confessed disciple of Scaliger who set out to learn all the languages of the ancient East. Selden amassed and read a vast scholarly library. (Pairs of his glasses, which he used as bookmarks, still turn up from time to time in the Bodleian Library, where his books now rest; like his careful underlinings and crisp, accurate identifications of passages quoted from the Babylonian Talmud, they give at least a faint sense of the vast, submerged bulk of his erudition.) He studied the Sanhedrin, the supreme rabbinical court in the ancient Jewish commonwealth, which he compared to the English Parliament; the calendar; and Jewish marriage customs. And he ridiculed the ignorant Puritans who constantly quoted from their little pocket Bibles in English but could not read the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Old Testament, not to mention the vast polyglot Bibles in which the Hebrew original, the Aramaic paraphrases, the Greek text of the Septuagint, and the Latin Vulgate nestled quarrelsomely side by side.

Selden and other Christian experts on Judaica reconstructed the Jewish state, described contemporary synagogue services, tried to work out what and how the idolators contemporary with the ancient Jews had worshiped. They translated the Mishnah and Maimonides, unveiled certain kabbalists, and explored Jewish treatises against the Christians. Their works fascinated Leibniz and Newton, and their information was still being recycled by Voltaire and Diderot.

For all their immense learning, though, as Manuel carefully shows, most of these men still tried to force the Jewish texts to fit molds of Christian devising. Only a few of them—like Willem Surenhuis, the sympathetic translator of the Mishnah, who celebrated the tolerance of Amsterdam and the reasonableness of the ancient Jewish laws—really appreciated the logic and the charm of traditional Jewish learning. And even they retained many stereotypes. Most of them deplored the disorder of Jewish ritual and the whimsies of rabbinical learning. Most of them explored only limited territories within the vast field of Jewish sources, and the limits of their knowledge were often defined by happenstance or the history of publication, rather than by principled choice.

Almost all Christian scholars, finally, cited all postbiblical Jewish sources, whether legal or homiletical, systematic or aggadic, Greek or Aramaic, as if they had been intended to carry equal weight. For most of them assumed that Judaism had become stable and unchanging when the Jews killed Jesus and refused to convert. Hence any Jewish source, from any period, could shed light on any other Jewish source—a mistake that few seventeenth-century scholars would have made when dealing with Greek or Latin texts. Many of these weighty gentlemen misread contemporary Judaism as well as historical Judaism, as when Increase Mather interpreted the rise of Shabbetai Zevi as a sign of the accomplishment of Ezekiel's prophecy. Manuel's assessment of this vast mass of material, though offered with restraint, is a major piece of historical work, impressively dense with detail, always cogently argued, and cast in a prose that captivates and amuses.

The second real core of the book follows immediately on the first. In the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Manuel shows, new ideas about the Jewish past leavened the enormous lump of baroque erudition. Here he draws on a major theme of his past work. Manuel titled one of his best books *The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods*; he knows more than anyone about how the intellectuals of the age of Newton and Vico, Voltaire and Jefferson, tried to understand the origins and the nature of religion. And he shows how the study of Judaism was radically reshaped in the course of the dramatic development of historical perspective that Paul Hazard called the "crisis of the European mind."

Spinoza, Père Richard Simon, and others began to see that Judaism had indeed changed over time. Not only later sources, but even individual books of the Bible had been written in a period language stuffed with obsolete concepts. Spinoza insisted on the ignorance of the Jews for whom the biblical text was written, Simon on the fallibility of the human scribes who actually produced and preserved the written word, excerpting texts now lost into the incoherent Pentateuch we have. But both men powerfully attacked the notion that all Judaism was a single thing (Simon learned this partly from reading a Jew, Rabbi Leon of Modena, as Maurice Olender has shown in his trenchant essay on *The Languages of Paradise*). They soon found allies. Students of comparative religion and mythology detected similarities, as well as differences, between Judaism and the other ancient religions. English deists used these to attack the notion that Judaism deserved any special priority. Instead of speculating on the mysteries of the Kabbalah, western scholars began to demythologize the Bible.

Paradoxically, the new historical and comparative approaches enhanced some Christians' appreciation of the biblical texts. Manuel describes the pioneering work of Johann David Michaelis, a Hebraist who taught at the innovative eighteenth-century university of Göttingen. There, as Herbert Butterfield long ago showed, historians used an interdisciplinary approach to put all ancient sources, from Homer to the Bible, into context. Michaelis detected similarities between the world of biblical Judaism and that of the Bedouins in his own day; and so he found it possible to appreciate the authenticity and the coherence of

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Moses' legal code in a new way. He even managed to convince the king of Denmark to mount a famous, catastrophic scientific expedition to Arabia to explore these matters further.

The new sense of history might demote Scripture to the level of an ordinary book, but it could also raise Judaism, at least in its early centuries, to the status of a profound and venerable religion once again. Naturally, Michaelis was as ambivalent as every other Christian reader of the Jews. He had little use for the credulous Jews of his own time, who still viewed the biblical text as inspired, or for the philosophical Moses Mendelssohn, to whom he condescended. As Manuel observes, "The more Michaelis glorified the Mosaic code, the less acceptable to him appeared the integration of contemporary Jews into German society." Gibbon and other scholarly pioneers were equally double-minded about the Jews.

The eighteenth-century discovery of a historical Judaism, in Manuel's account, was as tangled and as problematic as the discovery of Greece carried out in the same years by Winckelmann, Heyne, and Wolf. In Enlightenment historicism, as in Renaissance allegory, a screen of assumptions still determined what the scholar could see. A vision of a glorious Jewish past still turned him against what he saw as the confusion and the ignorance of the Jewish present. And so it was that efforts to re-create the past as it really was resulted in the creation of modern myths.

Myths about Jews certainly flourished outside the universities during the so-called age of reason, when philosophy replaced philology at the white-hot centers of intellectual fashion. Manuel brings out the full richness—and the frequent bitterness—of the Enlightenment's versions of Judaism. He reviews Voltaire's and d'Holbach's attacks on vengeful, vicious Jews, as hateful as the caricatures of the Reformation blood libel; Herder's praise of the primitive, Ossianic profundity of biblical poetry; Mendelssohn's unwilling effort to defend Judaism against its detractors and Kant's terrifyingly brilliant refutation of him. He traces the dissolution of traditional forms of learning into the derivative journalism of the Encyclopédie and the rise of the new sciences of Judaism developed by Christians and Jews in the nineteenth century. (Manuel's account of Catholic texts about Jews is particularly original and informative.) His conclusion examines anti-Semitism and liberation in the nineteenth century, and the complexities of Christian reactions to Judaism, scholarly and theological, in the present.

In the end, irony prevails over optimism. "Old cataracts are being removed," Manuel says at the end of his discussion of the Dead Sea Scrolls and their implications, "new ones are forming." Imaginary Jews continue to outnumber real ones, thanks to the misplaced creativity and the unnoticed blinders of contemporary scholars, who often lack even the cosmopolitanism and the tolerance of their early modern counterparts. Yet this historian of utopian thought finally allows himself a utopian hope: that some form of syncretism may finally emerge, in which Jews and Christians alike may come to revere parts of one another's traditions. "In the course of time the Judaic part in the passion of Christ may be mythologized out of existence, even as the Romans were forgiven for the persecution of the Christians and a pagan Virgil came to serve as a guide for Dante." It is characteristic of Manuel to see a revival of allegory and myth as the price that would have to be paid for the creation of such a syntheses. Utopian hope need not imply foolish optimism.

Manuel's complex story of scholarly misreaders and inhumane humanitarians yields a simple, gloomy moral. It is that optimism of any sort is misplaced when cultures meet. The growth of knowledge does not always generate understanding. Scholarship, like science, grows from prejudices as well as from the desire to know. Its results reflect the passions of individuals and the patterns of their culture as well as the discovery of new facts and texts. Hence it is as likely to regress as to progress. In a case like that of Judaism, where the prejudices have far more attractive power than any data could, the limits of understanding may prove frighteningly narrow.

The modern physicist certainly knows the physical world better than Newton could; but the modern Christian who studies Judaism may well know far less than Scaliger or Surenhuis. And even they saw what they wished to see, and ridiculed the living Jews from whom they learned and for whom they claimed to speak. The Christian enterprise of understanding Judaism has been, and probably will remain, a torment as well as a stimulus to both parties. It is a situation that is not likely to change—except, perhaps, in Manuel's utopian future. But his learned and honest book exposes the twisted, bitter roots of error. A master historian has practiced his necessary craft.

ANTHONY GRAFTON teaches early modern European history at Princeton University. His new book, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts*, will be published in the fall by Harvard University Press.

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Ethical and Policy Issues

Robert P. Huefner and
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Contributors

Daniel Wikler, Allan R. Nelson, M.D., Harold Bauman, Paul J. Feldstein, Suzanne Dandoy, M.D., John G. Francis, Norman J. Waitzman, Lawrence D. Brown, Mark W. Wolcott, M.D., Charles B. Smith, M.D., J. William Hollingsworth, M.D., David Wilsford, Kenneth N. Buchi, M.D., Bruce M. Landesman, Leslie P. Francis, Allan Buchanan, Robert P. Huefner, Frank Thompson, Margaret P. Battin, Leonard J. Haas, Peter C. Appleby, and Dan W. Brock.

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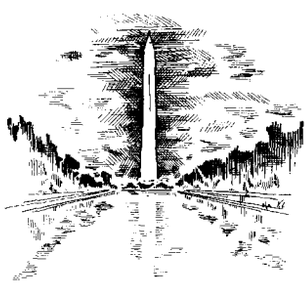
WASHINGTON DIARIST

Me and my cars

MY FAMILY HAS FOUR CARS. I DRIVE only one, but the other three don't sit idle. My wife, my daughter in college, and my daughter in high school each use a car every day. I know all this driving doesn't please environmentalists, but I never thought it gravely affected the tenets of political correctness. Until now. Maybe I'm paranoid, but I sense the beginnings of a moralistic new crusade to persuade or force people to curb their driving. For example, talk is picking up—including in these pages—about the embarrassingly low price of gasoline in America. (Sorry, I don't feel embarrassed.) There's also been a spate of newspaper stories reporting on, and bemoaning, the rise in three-or-more-car families and the decline in car pooling and mass transit ridership. Even Washington's safe, clean, and generally reliable Metro system has experienced a drop. The unspoken message of these stories is: What's the matter with you people, acting so selfish and stupid? Officialdom is joining the crusade. In traffic-clogged New Jersey, officials canceled $1.2 billion in new highway projects, choosing to spend the money on mass transit. In Sacramento I chatted with a California state official who wants to use zoning restrictions to halt expansion of the suburbs and force increased population density in close-in areas. The aim is to make mass transit a more attractive option and to pressure people into giving up one or two of their cars.

IT'LL NEVER WORK. THERE'S NOT much chance I'll go back to two or even three cars, and one car is downright unthinkable. I don't believe anybody else is going to cut back either. There's a reason, and it's not just that Americans are car crazy (though they are). It's the freedom, convenience, and flexibility that comes from having a car at your disposal. The automobile is the most freeing instrument yet invented. It allows folks to take jobs far away from their homes. It enables them to live far from central cities and, if they're anti-social, far from other people. Two cars make the two-earner family possible. Sure, there's a downside: traffic congestion and pollution. Most people are willing to put up with those, within limits. I'm amazed at the incredible commutes—an hour or more each way—some people are willing to endure daily just to be able to drive to work when and with whom they wish. But it goes to show how strongly attached people are to their cars. And the attachment has grown as cars have become an extension of home and office, with telephones, message pads, coffee cups, books (on tape), etc. Government officials ought to recognize this. And if they want to be responsive, they won't emphasize mass transit. They'll build more highways.

THE FIGHT OVER THE AUTOMOBILE is another skirmish in the long-standing political war described compellingly in Jeffrey Bell's *Populism and Elitism: Politics in the Age of Equality.* Populists, Bell writes, are optimistic "about people's ability to make decisions about their lives." Elitists are pessimistic about people, but optimistic "about one or more elites, acting on behalf of other people." Elitists, be they liberals or conservatives, think people don't know the most efficient way to get to work or wherever they want to go. If they did, they'd opt for mass transit instead of driving in jammed traffic. Populists figure that people know what's in their best interest, even if that means inching to work on congested highways. Being stuck in traffic is no fun, but people weigh that against the advantages of driving their own car. If they want to take off early, they can (but couldn't if they were car pooling). With a car, they're free to work late (but couldn't if the last subway train had gone). By the way, Bell's book is about politics, not cars. His highly original thesis: American politics is a struggle not between parties or ideologies but between populists (Jefferson, Wilson, Reagan) and elitists (Washington, Hoover, Mondale). Bell, I've learned, lives near a subway stop. He drives to work.



I RODE MASS TRANSIT—FIRST THE bus, then Metro—for nearly two decades. I gave it up when I got a parking space (partially subsidized) at my building. I didn't mind riding the bus or subway, but I like driving a lot better. I'm lucky to have the choice. Most people don't. The vast majority of jobs are not downtown anymore. The workplace has been decentralized. Instead, "edge cities" like Tyson's Corner in Northern Virginia have sprung up on the fringes of every metropolitan area. And the result is that mass transit simply doesn't make as much sense as it used to. It's great for getting people downtown, but fewer want to go there. New rapid rail systems, like the fantastically expensive subway in Los Angeles, are instant white elephants. For jobs scattered about the suburbs, you've got to have a car. Or two or three or four.

I'M GLAD THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION has finally proposed the obvious answer to the auto pollution problem: buy up all the clunkers, the pre-1982 cars on the road. Bushies latched onto this idea to help the auto industry—people will have to buy new cars to replace their clunkers. But a more persuasive reason is that clunkers emit 40 percent to 70 percent of all auto pollution, depending on whose estimate you believe. I've got a clunker, a 1975 Oldsmobile Cutlass. It still drives like a dream, but it also pollutes more than its share. I'd happily turn over my Olds, worth maybe $100 as junk, for a bounty of $700 to $1,000, the range suggested by Bush officials. The argument against this is that poor people wouldn't sell because the bounty isn't enough to buy a new car, or they would sell but then would pocket the money. I doubt they'd go without wheels. To make sure they could afford a new car, the bounty could be means-tested. I'd get less for my Olds than a poor person would. Sounds fair, and I'd still come out ahead.

I PERK UP WHEN A POLITICIAN announces he or she is about to speak candidly about race. Invariably what follows is disappointing. Senator Bill Bradley got credit for addressing this supersensitive issue in a speech March 26. "It is time for candor," he said, then offered practically none. Bill Clinton, in a speech to the Democratic Leadership Council after the L.A. riot, was more candid, but only a little. If he were president, he said, he'd spell out for blacks and whites "here is what the leaders should do, and here is what the people must do." Fine, but then he didn't spell things out, except to tell whites they shouldn't think "violence has only a black face." President Bush isn't any better on the race issue. He treats blacks solely as victims too. I'm waiting for a politician to say that white racism is one part of the problem, but there's another part, an internal problem in the black community—crime, gangs, illegitimacy, welfare dependency—that blacks must confront aggressively. The only person I've heard say this post-L.A. is Shelby Steele. And he's a black English professor, not a pol.

FRED BARNES

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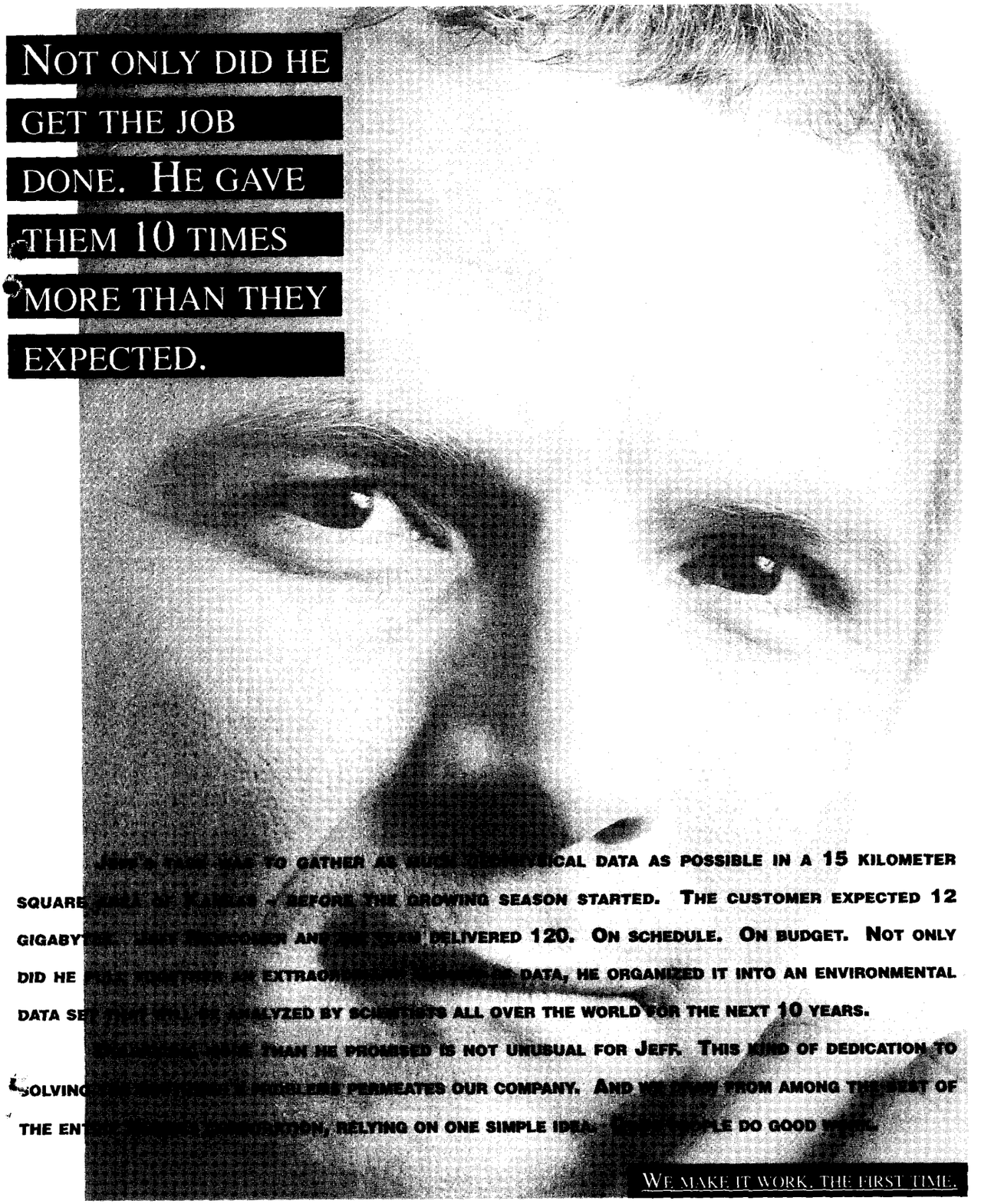

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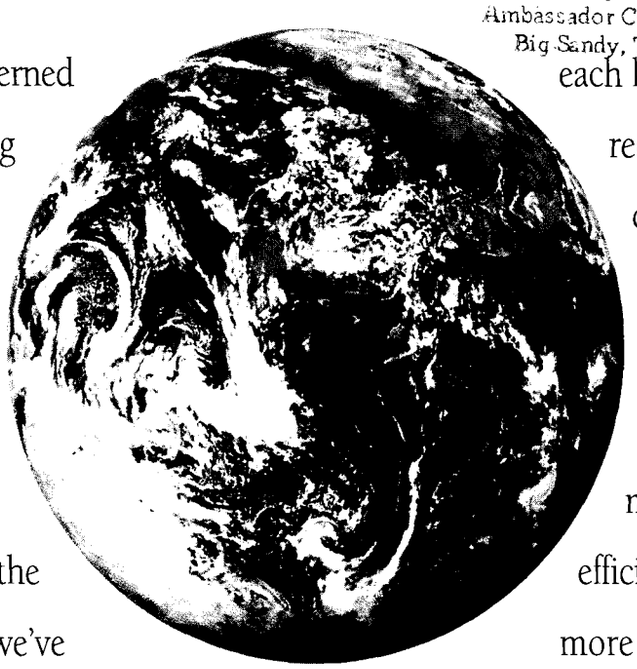

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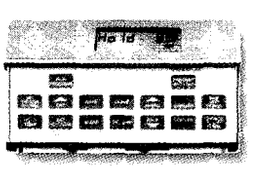

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